

## How To Have A Spirit Of Optimism

**In these trying and perilous times, when those who strive to abide in the “doctrine of Christ” are often criticized by those who wantonly transgress the “doctrine of Christ,” there is a great and urgent need for God’s children to be infused with a Spirit of Optimism. Thanks be to a loving God, He has provided the means whereby this can be abundantly supplied.**

The New Testament is replete with warnings that children of God will face various obstacles in their life as a Christian. Paul reminds us that “*all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*” (2 Tim. 2:12). Our Lord told the church in Smyrna that the devil would cast some of them “*into prison*” that they might “*be tried*” (Rev. 2:10). In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians he tells them to “*be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*” (Eph. 6:10-11). Then, the Ephesians are depicted as soldiers, being instructed to arm themselves for battle against the devil (vv. 12-17). In I Timothy 6:12, Timothy is told to: “*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...*”

Christ warned of “*false prophets*” who would come in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15). John wrote, “*try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (I John 4:1). Peter wrote: “*there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies*” (2 Pet. 2:1). Paul says, “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine*” but would turn away from the truth (2 Tim. 4:3-4). In I Tim. 4:1, Paul says the Spirit said, “*that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith...*”

From all the warnings given; that there would be persecutions, false teachers of various kinds, a warfare or a fight against the devil and his devices, that some would depart from the faith, not enduring sound doctrine, it should be clear to every Christian that the life of the Christian will involve many trials. It should also be clear that many of the things of which we have been warned are now upon us. Also, the Christian life is one in which multiplied temptations must be faced and overcome if the Crown of Life is to be won. In view of these things there is a real danger that one can become discouraged, allowing his faith to become weak, to falter, even to the point of falling by the wayside, turning back to walk no longer with the Lord. This very thing is indeed happening to not a few! We should beware of the danger.

In order for one to overcome the above difficulties, to be victorious in the “*good fight of faith*,” **a spirit of optimism** is of the utmost importance! We can be sincerely thankful that we can have this optimism if we so desire. It is tragic that so many will never enter the portals of

glory simply because they lacked the optimism which characterizes the faithful and which could have been theirs. It is with the hope that we may encourage some to be infused with a **spirit of optimism** that we offer some suggestions on **How To Have A Spirit Of Optimism**. Before those suggestions, however, we want to consider a few other matters relative to optimism. We begin by explaining:

### WHAT WE MEAN BY OPTIMISM

By **optimism** we mean: Taking the most hopeful or cheerful view of matters. Expecting the best outcome of things. Looking on the “bright side” rather than the “dark side.” Someone has suggested the following difference between an **optimist** and a **pessimist**. The optimist says, “Every cloud has a silver lining,” whereas the pessimist says, “Behind every silver lining there is a cloud.”

### THE IMPORTANCE OF OPTIMISM

Optimism is highly important even in the secular realm. A business can hardly succeed without it. The artist, musician, athlete, etc. who thinks of success is much more likely to be successful. Successful people are usually those who think of ways to make things work and reasons why they should, and have a measure of confidence in their ability to achieve success in their endeavor. On the other hand, the world is full of people who are failures, many of whom thought of reasons why they couldn't succeed and consequently didn't.

Our need to succeed in the area of the spiritual realm is much greater than our need to succeed in the secular realm. The spiritual realm does deal with living hope and assurance in this life, but more importantly with our eternal state of existence, whereas secular things are only temporary and limited to life here on earth.

### OPTIMISM NEEDED TO ASSURE SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

Spiritual success is assured, but conditionally. It is not likely to come to those who constantly think of reasons why they may fail. There are many more reasons for being optimistic in the spiritual realm than in the secular realm.

In the secular realm there are many things which can cause failure, even in the face of the greatest optimism on the part of the person involved. Such things as: sickness, death, war, weather, the economy, lack of ability, lack of money, and a host of other things, some of which may be entirely beyond one's control, may bring failure.

In the spiritual realm it is far different! The true, all-powerful God assures success, giving many valid reasons for **optimism** on the part of the faithful Christian. With God on their side, faithful Christians cannot fail. It is in view of the God-assured success mentioned above that we set forth a number of God-given reasons for **optimism** on the part of the faithful Christian, that a victorious race can be run and the “*crown of righteousness*” received. We begin by stating:

### FEAR CAN BE OVERCOME

The world is filled with fear. There is fear of: war, terrorism, oppression, atomic destruction, death, disease, hunger, storms, fire, and others. But fear can be overcome by *faith, hope and love*. Paul says of these three that they *abide* (I Cor. 13:13). **Faith** sustains us. Paul says, “*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that*

day” (2 Tim. 1:12). **Hope** serves as an anchor of the soul. “*Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast...*” (Heb. 6:19). **Love** casts out fear. “*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love*” (I John 4:18). In the beautiful, oft-quoted Psalm 23, we have the words of David as he said: “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou are with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*” (v. 4) The fear which brings failure need not overcome us.

### **MISTAKES CAN BE OVERCOME**

We, as Christians, must recognize the fact that we will make mistakes. The greatest of men have done so. Noah, Moses and David made their mistakes. Peter made his mistakes. Paul made a tragic mistake in the persecution of God’s children before he obeyed the gospel. And, as a Christian he said, “*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway*” (I Cor. 9:27). Some have simply failed to do things to avoid making a mistake, but that doesn’t work. Someone wrote the following lines, which make a very good point indeed: “He made no mistakes, he took no wrong road, he never fumbled the ball. He never went down neath the weight of the load, he simply did nothing at all.” No greater mistake!

The Christian’s sins can be forgiven. The apostle John points out clearly that Christians sin, but he points out just as clearly that those sins can be forgiven, conditionally. “*But if walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (I John 1:7-9). In view of God’s word, as spoken by John, there is no need to allow sin to keep one out of heaven, the beautiful home of the soul.

### **THE GREAT ASSURANCE BY GOD IN THIS LIFE**

Paul makes a great statement in Romans 8:28, when he said: “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*” Then Paul adds, “*If God be for us, who can be against us?*” (Rom. 8:31). As long as we put our faith and trust in God, in accordance with His will, we can know that eternal victory will be ours.

We can do all things through Christ. Paul knew what it was to face difficulties, as he points out in 2 Corinthians 11, and he knew by experience that he could overcome those things. He expresses his optimism when he declared: “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*” (Phil. 4:13).

Temptation can be resisted. When people offer excuses for their failure to resist temptations they are ignoring Paul’s words of assurance when he said: “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted about that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*” (I Cor. 10:13). In view of Paul’s statement, Christians who take God at His word need not fear that they cannot have the necessary strength to overcome the temptations which are bound to be faced along the pathway of life. This is where the need for a faith which does not falter comes in. John says, “*...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*” (I John 5:4).

### **LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD**

While men may labor hard for various objectives in this life, their labor can be, and often is, in vain. But such is never the case relative to the faithful’s labor “*in the Lord.*” Note what Paul wrote the

Corinthians. *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (I Cor. 15:58).

What greater assurance of victory could one possibly want than that which we have just noted? If we believe God’s word when it says: 1) All things work together for good.... 2) If God be for us who can be against us? 3) We can do all things through Christ. 4) A way of escape from temptation is provided. 5) Our labor is not in vain in the Lord. How can we fail to have a **spirit of optimism**?

### AN ALL-SUFFICIENT GUIDE IS PROVIDED

In the secular world and in the world of man-made religions faulty guidance is continually being given. However, with God’s faithful servants such is never the case, when God’s guidance is relied upon. Peter describes divine guidance when he said, *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...”* (I Pet. 4:11). Paul makes a statement which is indeed quite comprehensive when he said: *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Tim. 3:16-17). When one follows God’s inspired instructions that one is right and cannot be wrong! When the doctrines of men are followed in spiritual matters, one is wrong and cannot be right. Why do men follow such?

### MAN’S NECESSITIES ARE PROMISED

Christ makes a conditional promise with regard to the basic necessities of life when he said, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt. 6:33). If we believe these words of our Savior, we will put spiritual things first place in our lives and not be drawn away by our pursuit of material things, which are all temporary. Only the *“things which are not seen are eternal”* (2 Cor. 4:18). But what a great cause for rejoicing and **optimism** that we can have those unseen things if we desire them with all our heart.

### MATERIAL SUCCESS IS NOT ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION

If a victorious life in Christ was conditioned upon material success it would make of God a respecter of persons, and many would be helpless and beyond the reach of a living hope. There is a statement made by Christ which must be seriously considered and taken to heart, in order to maintain a **spirit of optimism**. That statement says: *“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”* (Lk. 12:15).

Trust in material wealth is one of the greatest enemies of **optimism** with regard to the promises of God. This is clearly borne out by the parable of the “Rich fool.” This rich man had a problem. What would he do with all his *“fruits”*? He would solve his problem by building greater barns. With this problem solved, he would (he thought) tell his soul to *“take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”* But his optimism was based upon the wrong thing. God called him a *“a fool,”* informing him that his life would end that very night. Then followed the sobering question, *“then whose shall those things be, which thou has provided?”* The bottom line, or the lesson to be learned from the parable is the statement made with reference to the above question, *“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”* (Lk. 12:16-21).

It is abiding in *“the doctrine of Christ”* which brings the approval of the Father and of the Son (2 John 9), not the accumulation of material wealth. Therefore, though our worldly possessions may be few, our Spirit of Optimism need not be hindered; we can have God’s divine approval.

The Christian can have God's love, and the approval of both the Father and the Son. Jesus said, "*If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*" (John 14:23). Those who love God have every right to be filled with optimism, since their love for God will assure their obedience to God's will for man. Obedience is the condition on which God's approval is available and can be maintained. Optimism based upon false teaching is a tragedy. Not only is it in vain, it may well prevent any further quest for truth, the only basis for true optimism.

Christians have been **redeemed**. For true servants of God, a price has been paid. Peter informs us that the price paid for us did not consist of "*corruptible*" things, "*But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (I Pet. 1:18). This redemption has enabled God-fearing people to become "*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and holy nation, a peculiar people...*" (I Pet. 2:9). How thankful we ought to be as God's chosen people, Christians, heirs of the heavenly home. The millions in the world have **no true hope!**

### **CHRISTIANS HAVE GREAT EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW**

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is known as **The Faith Chapter**, for therein we find listed a goodly number of "heroes of faith." These powerful examples of faith can be a great source of encouragement to Christians, telling them that they, too, can have a faith which can overcome the world and result in eternal victory. We would do well to note briefly some of those great examples.

*"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous...he being dead yet speaketh"* (v. 4).

*"By faith Enoch was translated...for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God"* (v. 5).

*"By faith Noah...prepared an ark to the saving of his house...and became heir of righteousness which is by faith"* (v. 7).

*"By faith Abraham...sojourned in the land of promise..He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God...By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac"* (vv. 8-18).

*"By faith Moses...Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward...Through faith they kept the passover...they passed through the Red Sea..."* (vv. 23-29).

A hero of faith in the New Testament was that of the apostle Paul. He had so served the Lord that he could say when he came near to the end of his way, "*For I am now ready to be offered...I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Those great witnesses noted above, and many others, are saying to us that we can run the race and win! That makes for real **Optimism!!**

### **GOD'S PRECIOUS PROMISES FOR ETERNITY**

**Mansions prepared.** As Jesus talked with His apostles concerning his forthcoming separation from them, Peter expressed great concern, saying that he would lay down his life for the Lord's sake. It was in the midst of this emotional condition that our Lord spoke some of His most comforting words, relative to the future of his faithful followers. I have personally referred to this passage on many occa-

sions when conducting a funeral service. I did it, not that it would in any way affect the state of the deceased, but rather that it might in some measure encourage the listeners to so live that they might die with a living hope for the future which would embrace those comforting words of Jesus when he said:

*“Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”* (John 14:1-3). Heaven will surely be worth it all!

**Former things will pass away.** The apostle John records a vision of “*a new heaven and a new earth.*” John saw “*new Jerusalem*” coming down from God out of heaven, and he heard a great voice, which said, “*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*” (Rev. 21:4).

There is no place on earth where one can be removed from the possibility of death, sorrow, crying and pain. These “former things” are indeed a reality. But the faithful in Christ can one day know what it is like to be removed from all these undesirable things. This is something wealth cannot buy, nor can it be obtained by force or influence. Yet, even the poor and lowly Christian can have it for eternity!

**A place where sin will not exist.** Sin is every place on earth where there are people. There is no place one can go where there will be no contact with sin. But there is a place where the faithful in Christ will exist apart from sin, in the world to come. Note the place John saw: “*And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a life: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life*” (Rev. 21:27).

### SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Now, let us reflect on **How To Have A Spirit Of Optimism**. To put it in a few words, it is simply a matter of **Taking God at His word**. When we truly believe in God and submit ourselves fully unto Him, we may know that heaven will one day be our home. Regardless of the pain we may suffer and the conflicts we may have to endure, heaven awaits the faithful.

That we are facing trying times with our society more addicted to ungodliness than ever since we’ve been around, and that those of us who are trying our best to abide **In The Doctrine of Christ** are being criticized by our own brethren who wantonly transgress the doctrine of Christ, is simply a matter of fact. But if those who lived faithfully in the First Century, in spite of all the wickedness, did so, so can we! Let us remember that the conditions we now see in the spiritual realm were predicted by inspired men.

Let us ever keep in mind that salvation is promised to those who obey Christ (Heb. 5:9). Let us also remember that there is no power that can keep us from heaven, other than ourselves. Our Lord died for us to enable us to have an abiding **spirit of optimism**. With God on our side Victory can be ours. “*If God be for us, who can be against us*” (Rom. 8:31). Assuredly, we can be “*more than conquerors through him that loved us*” (Rom. 8:37). God has done His part in making salvation possible for us, and the Lord doesn’t want us to perish (2 Pet. 3:9). Therefore let us look forward to that “*crown of righteousness*” with the same assurance as did the great apostle Paul (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

- - - Walter W. Pigg

## Authority In Religion And Life

Alan Adams, Assistant Editor

Moral and civil decay and disorder are all about us. There exists now, more than at anytime in my life, a tremendous disdain for authority. I fear that we're only now seeing the "tip of the iceberg." On the pages of human history is written the sad story of man's refusal to respect authority and the consequences thereof. It started with Adam and Eve. Their firstborn, Cain, followed suit. When it came time to offer sacrifice, Cain was not to be bothered by the details. A sacrifice is a sacrifice you know. As long as you're "religious," the details don't particularly matter. God didn't see it that way: "But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell" (Gen. 4:5). God *did* have "respect" unto Abel's offering, because "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. 11:4). Abel did what he did "by faith," and "faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). It was all a matter of authority; doing things according to God's word or following some other "authority."

*Webster* says that authority is the "power or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final decisions, jurisdiction." In the **NT**, it is said that "all authority, on earth, as well as in heaven" was given unto Christ (Matt. 28:18). It is further said that Jesus delegated certain authority to His apostles (Lk. 9:1). Paul spoke of the "authority which the Lord gave me" (2 Cor. 13:10). Until a person recognizes and under stands this matter of biblical authority, he simply cannot "get off the ground" in his effort to serve and please God.

Notice a passage that places man under the absolute obligation to recognize and abide by; to do all things by the authority of Jesus Christ. Jesus possesses "all authority," and furthermore, "all things" are under

"his feet." He is the "head over all things" (Eph. 1:22). Now ask, "How does all this relate to us?" Paul answers by saying, "And whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). This passage encompasses the totality of our lives, worship, and service. It applies to "whatsoever ye do," leaving nothing out. It has particular application to our very "words" and "deeds." *Words* has reference to the things we say or teach, and *Deeds* speaks of the things we do, our actions or practices. Surely there is a deficiency in our teaching and understanding of the absolute authority King Jesus is to have in our lives. This is why the Scriptures say that in order to become a Christian one must "confess with [the] mouth the **Lord** Jesus" (Rom. 10:10).

Finally, it should be emphasized that Paul said that all our "words" and "deeds" must be said or done "in the name of the Lord Jesus." This phrase, "In the name of the Lord Jesus," is a qualifying, adverbial phrase. If I say, "Do something *quickly*," we all understand the adverb *quickly* modifies the main action, *do*. *Doing* something "in the name of the Lord Jesus" does not mean that we first, verbally, utter the words, "Lord Jesus." That would pretty well be a physical impossibility. Also note that Jesus himself said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father (Matt. 7:21). No, the idea of doing things in the name of the Lord has a far-reaching meaning: It tells *how* or *in what manner* we are to do and say all things.

It's always good to allow the Bible to define its own terms. In Acts 4, Peter and John have just been arrested by jealous Jewish authorities. Peter, an apostle, had healed a man who had been lame for forty years. This had been done in the presence of multitudes of people, who in turn gave attention to the preaching of these Apostles. They were then "hauled into court" and questioned about the affair. In verse 7, the rulers said, "By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?" The word "power" is another word for "authority"; in fact, in the original tongue, it is the exact word that is translated "authority" in other places. They were asking Peter and John "By what right, what authority are you

doing and saying these things?” In other words, “In whose name?” Peter promptly responded by saying these things had been done “in the name of Jesus Christ.” In fact Peter sums up the whole matter by saying, “And in none other name is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved” (Acts 4:10-12). There you have it. To say that a thing is done or said “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is the same as saying that it is done or said “by his authority or power.”

Now, plug this definition into Colossians 3:17. The Holy Spirit here demands that everything we say or teach, and everything we do or practice, must be done by the authority of, at the behest of, with the permission of Jesus Christ. For any *action* or *teaching* to meet with God’s approval, it must be the case that Christ, through His Word (Rom. 10:17; I Cor. 14:37), has either *commanded* that teaching or action, or, he has otherwise given us the right or permission in the same. When we “go onward [beyond] the teaching of Christ,” we “go” alone, because when we proceed without the permission or authority of Christ, we “have not God” (2 John 9-11). We are citizens of the “**kingdom** of God’s dear Son,” not a **democracy**. The Authority or Permission, whether to “do” or “say,” has been granted by the **King**. It is not a thing to be trifled with.

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### The Madison Church Of Christ

The Madison church, when the late Ira North was their preacher, was known as the largest congregation of the Lord’s people in the world. The date of Nov. 19, 1978, will long be remembered as an infamous day by God-fearing members of the church. The Nov. 18 issue of *The Nashville Banner* carried more than a half-page add, announcing: “**Madison takes a Giant Step Forward!**” John Stevens, Norvel Young, Claude Gardner, and Tom Holland were “Special Speakers On This Exciting Day.” The Exciting Day was the opening of Madison’s “Life-Educational Center.” From that point onward, Madison has been a leader in unscriptural innovations, influencing many, many people.

Madison is now in a turmoil. Their institution of “Progressive Worship” has gained public attention. Now a number of members at Madison are trying to change its course, to get back to what God’s word teaches. Hundreds have left madison. I have just talked at length with a Madison member who is involved in trying to bring about that change. Pray that these concerned brethren may succeed. - -  
*Editor*

### “...I Get to be Naked”

*Alan Adams, Assistant Editor*

Yes. As indicated by the quotation marks, the above title is something that someone actually said. No! Said remarks are not mine. Neither is the quotation given for the mere purpose of sensationalism or to shock anybody’s sensibilities. There is a point to be made; yet, a little background is essential.

#### WHO WOULD SAY SUCH A THING AND WHY?

The Olympics dominated the news for quite sometime. Naturally, coaches and athletes alike



were interested in anything that might give them the edge in the competition. It seems that the coach of the Canadian swim team, David Johnson, has his own special ideas as to how his charges might “take home the gold.” In *The Tennessean* (July 22, 1996, IC), writer, David Climer, has “fun” telling the story.

Climer says that Coach “...Johnson established a team policy that declared whoopie a banned substance. His cause/effect logic: No sex, more medals. No pain, no gain—you must abstain.” As far as I am concerned, Mr. Climer is a disgusting person, and most of his remarks are disgusting. He finds the whole suggestion of abstinence to be simply hilarious. He scoffs at the notion that anyone might, for whatever reason, suggest that young, virile athletes could possibly, somehow contain themselves.

He says, “When you have this many young, fine-tuned bodies together in one huge dormitory complex, there are a lot of harmones bouncing off the walls.” He quotes a University of Tennessee swimmer, Tripp Schwenk as saying, “If they [Canadians, AA] think it’ll help, more power to ‘em. But I’m glad we don’t have rules like that...”

Yes. It would seem that America, as well as the rest of the world, has forgotten how to blush. Johnson, the Canadian coach, is only concerned that his athletes not be “distracted” by sex. Climer and athlete Schwenk are amused at the mere hint that youngsters not be thus “distracted.” One thing is crystal clear. None of them care one whit for what the Bible has to say on the topic. “Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

#### YOUNGSTERS ARE JUST GOING TO DO IT

The Devil, “father” of all liars (Jno. 8:44), has done a good job of completely blinding the hearts of people into thinking that human beings are like dogs and that sex is some kind of involuntary reflex, like breathing.

Is it true that young people are at the mercy of their passions? What does the Bible say? What has the Bible always said? —

“Flee fornication” (I Cor. 6:18). “...because of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (7:2). “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as becometh saints” (Eph. 5:3). “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication, that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust even as the Gentiles who know not God” (I Thess. 4:3-4). “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity” (I Tim. 4:12). “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the master’s use, prepared unto every good work. But flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:21-22).

#### BRETHREN HAVE BOUGHT INTO THIS LIE

The Holy Spirit was not just Whistling Dixie when He warned, “...be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...” (Rom. 12:2). There has always been the danger, in fact, the reality of Christians allowing their moral compass to be set by the world.

When it comes to this whole subject of sex, some brethren are “dull of hearing” (Heb. 5:11), if not downright naive. Years ago, upon passing a beach in Taiwan, my eldest son (then very young)

asked, “Why are those people naked?” My six-year-old once asked a young guest, “Why are you wearing a bra?” The little friend replied, “It’s not a bra, it’s a bathing suit.” Even a six-year-old understands that what is normally a piece of women’s underclothing is not appropriate for public display, is no less so when you put floral designs on it and call it a bathing suit. It’s not a suit in any sense of the term.

Like the little boy in the story of *The Emperor Who Wore No Clothes*, it seems we still need the unsullied honesty of children to remind us of what we surely know but have suppressed. Taking your clothes off in public whether at the beach, within the marching band, as a member of the cheerleading squad, or for sports, is called “nakedness” and it is a “shame” (Rev. 3:18).

The First Pair shattered original innocence with their disobedience and they “knew that they were naked” (Gen. 3:7). The prophet Ezekiel describes things that a “just” man would do, among them being, “cover[ing] the naked with a garment” (Ezek. 18:5, 7). It is frustrating to see so many Christians going right along with doing just the opposite.

### BUT, WHAT CONSTITUTES NAKEDNESS?

I often marvel at the parable Jesus taught of the “unrighteous steward” (Lk. 16:1-13). The Lord did not condone this man of the world’s dubious business practices, rather, in reference to this man’s quickness and shrewdness of mind, He said that he had “done wisely.” It was out of this background, that the Master said, “the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of light” (v. 8)

It is a sad fact that non-Christians are often “wiser” and more forthright in the world of unrighteousness than are Christians who are supposed to be “walking in the light” (I Jno. 1:7).

Back to the *Tennessean* article. Listen carefully as one of the “sons of this world” speaks honestly and openly about sex and nakedness:

“...I’m glad we don’t have rules like that [no sex while in competition, AA],” said Tripp Schwenk, a University of Tennessee swimmer, slowly shaking his head and not trying very hard to suppress a smile.

This is after all, a water-logged U.S. delegation that includes Erich Wunderlich, who, when asked why he is still in deep water at the age of 26, said: **“I stuck with swimming because I get to be naked.”**

I have had many conversations with Christians who simply will not be as honest and forthcoming on the topic of sex and nakedness as Mr. Wunderlich has.

If you are determined to give your blessing to your son, daughter, wife, or husband when they go to the beach or the pool in their “suits” [I speak after the manner of men], at least admit, as this Olympian has, they are “naked.”

Fathers and husbands: Please have the love and concern for your daughters and wives that will lead you to sit down with them and talk openly and frankly about human sexuality, passion, and the power of lust. For far too long, we have sat timidly saying, “S-h-h-h,” while the world defines fashion and fun for us.

Sit town with the whole family and candidly discuss what Jesus said about *looking*, *lusting*, and *adultery*. “...every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:28). Read Exodus 20:26, “Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not uncovered thereon.” Then, turn to 28:42 which explains how the priests were to avoid exposing themselves: “thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness, from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ: The Holy Spirit says that we are “to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ? (I Pet. 2:5). Can we be any less concerned about exposing “the flesh of [our] nakedness” than were the priests of old?

The bodies of men and women are to be kept pure and private. Pure for the day when you will give yourself in marriage, and, private to all except that one to whom God has joined you (I Cor. 7:1-7; Matt. 19:6). “Nakedness” is a shame; it is a sin.

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Editor’s Note: The above article was written in Aug. 1996, but it is just as timely now as it was then. It is a shame that too often members of the church cannot be distinguished from worldly people on the basis of what they choose to wear!

### **Some Questions About Sunday Night**

Our loving God has been so very, very good to us,  
By His divine word revealing things wrong and right.  
And, it is from this important spiritual standpoint,  
That we pose these questions about SUNDAY NIGHT.

Living the Christian life requires one’s serious efforts.  
It’s a faithful action described in His word as a “fight”!  
And if we plan to stand with the conquering victors,  
Can we ever fail our Captain, even on a SUNDAY NIGHT?

Serving the Lord is a gracious Christian privilege,  
In which all God-fearing people will certainly delight.  
But that serving is not limited to Lord’s day morning,  
Don’t you agree that it includes each SUNDAY NIGHT?

The Lord’s day must be a very special one to all of us,  
And the assembling of the saints is pleasing in His sight.  
Why should anyone who claims to love the Lord,  
Be absent from His assembly when it’s SUNDAY NIGHT?

The church of our Lord is God’s spiritual family,  
In which the bond of friendship should be very tight.  
And if our Master only commanded assembly Sunday morning,  
Wouldn’t our love also bring us together on SUNDAY NIGHT?

Think of the influence upon many you may be having,  
When you as a Christian light fail to shine very bright.  
Aren’t you as a living example to many others saying,  
My Lord’s church isn’t worth my time, not on SUNDAY NIGHT?

Beloved, the great day of judgment will some time appear!  
With the lost on the Lord’s left hand and the faithful on His right.  
My dear friend, where will you stand on that great day,  
If in cold indifference you forget the Lord on SUNDAY NIGHT?

- - - *Walter W. Pigg*

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**Are you planning to attend the *Banner of Truth Lectures*?** For those in driving distance who cannot be with us during the day sessions, there will be two speakers each evening, at 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. Why not use a few days of vacation time and plan to hear each of the 24 speakers during the four days?

### **Brother John Dale's Appointment To F-HU Board**

Several people have expressed concern, including some F-HU students, about the recent appointment of brother John Dale to the F-HU Board. I share that concern myself, since it shows clearly the direction the school is going, and has been going for some time. I've written brother Milton Sewell, to express my concern, but as of this date I have not received any response from him.

Though brother Sewell has not responded to me, he has responded to another's expression of concern. We think interested brethren should have some idea as to the thinking of F-HU's President, along with the dean of the School of Biblical Studies and the director of graduate studies in Bible.

Brother Sewell says that before a person is appointed to the Board of Trustees that person is visited by a committee of the board to insure that the person meets the qualifications to serve. This was done in the case of John Dale, says brother Sewell, and John was appointed with unanimous support.

Brother Sewell makes mention of the reports which were circulated relative to John Dale's meeting with the St. Leo Catholic Church in Murray, KY, during the week of Sept. 24, 2000. Bro. Sewell says he asked Billy Smith and Earl Edwards to invite other seasoned and mature members of the Bible Faculty to join with them in a visit to discuss the concerns raised about the Catholic Church matter. The groups report after visiting with John Dale was positive and indicated full confidence in the doctrinal soundness of John, according to bro. Sewell.

Brother Sewell also says that elders from the East Wood congregation in Paris, and elders from the Glendale Road congregation were present when John spoke at the Catholic Church and have not expressed concern over what John said.

Brother Sewell also says that a recent report from John indicated that he (John) had conducted four Bible studies with the Catholics and one has been converted as a result of John's contacts made as a result of the Catholic meeting.

I spent about three years at Freed-Hardeman but that was more than thirty years ago. I also helped raise a few thousand dollars to support the school. My wife put in many hours in fund-raising work. When I first attended F-HC (1953-55) I didn't dream that I would see the changes which have come about since then at F-HU. The matter about which I'm writing is the most valid evidence of just how far the school has gone. But considering "our schools" of the past, I should

have been aware of the danger of a departure from the purpose of the school as set forth by its founders. If the current situation has not served as a warning, some people just couldn't be warned, and that is the case with some.

Brethren just think! There was unanimous support of John Dale by the Board of Trustees. This shows what the Board stands for or rather, doesn't stand for. But not only does the Board support the action, what about the heads of the Bible department and other faculty? Billy Smith, dean of the School of Bible Studies and Earl Edwards, the director of graduate studies in Bible, along with other faculty members indicated full confidence in John Dale's doctrinal soundness, according to Sewell.

A question I would like to have answered is: Do these people, mentioned above, know what doctrinal soundness is? or is it a lack of concern? or both? It is not a matter of what John Dale said when he participated in the *Jubilee 2000 Revival* of the Catholic church. It is a matter of breaking God's law on fellowship in the first place. Brother Richard Guill and I were present as observers when John Dale participated in the Catholic Revival. He, along with elders and members from Glendale engaged in the activities with the Catholic Church. A Catholic priest opened the services and closed the services. If

John Dale said anything with which the Catholics would not agree, I can't recall what it was. I have also listened to a tape of all that was said by John. If John, elders and members from Glendale, did not engage in fellowshipping the Catholic Church, then we should tear out of the New Testament God's teaching on the subject of fellowship!

Just think! According to bro. Sewell, the elders at Glendale and at the East Wood congregation in Paris expressed no concern over the matter. (P. 14)

The matter of fellowshipping the Catholic Church in their *Revival* is just one of the errors engaged in by John Dale and the Glendale congregation. They have had Walt Leaver for a meeting. They dismissed a Sunday evening service to support a meeting by Randy Harris at the University congregation. John Dale has publicly encouraged people to hear F. LaGard Smith and other false teachers at David Lipscomb. John has in a public way unjustly criticised the church of our Lord, agreeing with criticisms of non-members which were not based on solid evidence.

A matter which somewhat surprised me was that of brother Sewell upholding by implication the erroneous idea that "The end justifies the means." Brother John Dale thinks along the same line, from what he has written to me. This error is being accepted widely and is seen in a number of areas, such as entertainment, food, fun and frolic. Just think of the implications of the idea that it is all right to fellowship the Catholic Church, if contacts can be made for Bible studies! Brethren, are our brethren of influence actually upholding this tragic error? And what of the faculty at F-HU?

Is it right to "do evil that good may come" (Rom. 3:8), as it was "slanderingly reported" by some that Paul was saying? If it is, shouldn't we on a wholesale basis start fellowshipping the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, and all the rest? After all, we might set up a Bible study. And, yes, we might actually convert someone. Would it be permissible to break God's law on fellowship, on the basis that we might convert someone? If so, why couldn't we break other laws of God on the same basis? Brethren, these things are not a matter of ignorance! If they were, there would be a good chance of these people being taught the truth. But lack of concern for God's truth is a most difficult matter to deal with. When people don't love the truth enough to stand by it, uphold and respect it, there is not much that can be done. But one thing can be done and better be done, if we are concerned about the spiritual well-being of our souls. That is, we

must not become partakers with those who transgress “the doctrine of Christ,” thereby bidding “God speed” to evil. Faithful brethren must stand up and be counted, for their own sake and for the well-being of the Lord’s church. Christ died for us, can’t we be faithful to Him by walking in the truth?

A matter that concerns me greatly is that with some people (brethren) their loyalty to a school or a man takes precedence over their loyalty to the Lord and His word. Following men rather than the Lord is one of the great dangers now confronting us.

May the Lord help us to “Walk in the light as he is in the light.” Help us to “contend for the faith.” Help us to “stand fast in the faith.” If we love the Lord we will keep His “commandments” (John 14:15, 23). The “love of God” is keeping his commandments (I John 5:3).

Let us pray for those who are turning away from the saving truth of God, that they may see the error of their way. Let us pray that we may never falter in serving the Lord as we walk life’s pathway.

-- *Walter W. Pigg*

### INFLUENCE

We as men are here today,  
But tomorrow we are gone.  
Others come along, that is true,  
But they, too, move on.

In our short sojourn here,  
Some kind of influence we leave.  
And, whether for good or for bad,  
Others we’re going to lead.

So, let’s live our lives every day,  
With our influence as good leaven.  
Then no one who walks in our footsteps,  
Shall be turned away from heaven.

- - - *Walter W. Pigg*

**Moving???** If you wish to continue receiving *Banner of Truth*, please let us know when your address changes. This way no issue will be missed, and it saves us \$\$\$.

### AN APPENDAGE TO THE ARTICLE ON THE APPOINTMENT OF JOHN DALE TO THE F-HU BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

Just a few hours ago an elder from a congregation in this area came by to discuss with me the

matter under consideration, plus some other matters. The elder voiced his complete approval of John Dale and also the participation of John, the Glendale elders, and members in the **Jubilee 2000 Revival** at the Catholic Church. Though he was not present at the **Revival** when brother John Dale spoke, he said that the participation of John and Glendale Road was not fellowship. Note a few of the attempts by the elder to justify the fellowship under consideration: 1) They didn't use music. 2) Glendale had their own songleader. 3) It is not wrong to teach someone. 4) John Dale has converted one person by participation in the **Revival**. 5) Christ went among sinners. 6) John was sincere.

The elder, who wasn't present, said that I was fellowshiping the Catholic Church just as much as John Dale and those from Glendale. The facts are: I did not participate in any activity on that occasion. I was there strictly as an observer, as was brother Richard Guill. But, according to the elder that didn't make any difference. By his reasoning, I have fellowshiped Hindus and others of pagans.

It is simply amazing that people will go all-out with efforts to justify what they want to believe and practice. But those "all-out" efforts seldom include turning to God's word in an attempt to justify things which are not approved by divine testimony.

I've mentioned the above, primarily to show the extent to which many are going to uphold things and people which suit their fancy. God's word is often given a back seat when it comes to making decisions as to things to practice and approve. Remember when people used to say: "There's one thing you must give those church of Christ people credit for; they know their Bibles"? That statement is not heard very often nowadays, at least I don't hear it often. Outright subjectivism rules the day in many cases, when God's objective word is the authority by which we must live if we are going to please God and reap His eternal reward.

- - - Walter W. Pigg

#### READERS' RESPONSE

"Hope this finds you and your wife well now. We so enjoy and appreciate BOT. We pray you will be able to continue in this good work...Enclosed please find a check to help in a small way - **"Ted & Vella Harshbarger."** - NM. *(Thanks for you prayers and concern. For our age I think our health is better than average, for which we are thankful. Your help is appreciated greatly! - - Editor).*

"My sister let me read a recent copy of your paper. It is excellent! Would you please add me to your mailing list?! Every Christian should read it! Thank you - **Bea Stelmach."** - OH. *(Welcome as a new reader. If you know of others who would profit by BOT, tell them about the paper and they may want to receive it - Editor).*

"I just received a copy of Banner of Truth and I love it. Please send me all the back issues you can. Let me know how much I owe you. I am so excited, I've never read so much wonderful reading of the Lord. I LOVE BANNER OF TRUTH, I am learning so much. May the Lord bless each of my brothers in Christ who help me in receiving the word - **Darlene Kirk."** - MI. *(It is*

most encouraging to know of those who have such interest in and love for the truth. I'm sending you about three dozen back issues. We don't charge for back issues. We do appreciate any contribution made to the paper, since that is the means by which it is made possible - Editor).

"I enjoy reading your paper and would definitely like copies of any back issues that you are willing to send me. I will definitely make use of them (I am a young preacher and do a lot of reading). I appreciate the sound doctrinal stance and attitude that you manifest in your writing. Keep up the good work! - **Stephen Bradd.**" - **IL.** (Back copies are on the way. Stephen, let me make a suggestion to you as a young preacher: If you are not already doing so, start building a good filing system and collect sound material on as many subjects as possible. This will be of the greatest help to you in years to come, and will save much time in searching for info. - Editor).

"Walter, use this in your work. Hope you and Naomi are doing well. Our family is good. Wish you both could come back to Heber....Keep up the good work! - **Jim and Jackie Patchell.**" - **AR.** (It is good to hear from someone at Heber Springs. My, how time has slipped away since we were there! I've spent nearly five years out of the country and Naomi has spent nearly four. We wish you could come to Murray for our lectures, June 4-7. We'll have 24 lessons by 16 speakers. Give you family our regards. Thanks for the help. We pray the Lord will richly bless you in the days to come - Walter and Naomi).

"Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I want to become a regular reader of 'Banner of Truth' Magazine so as to be more knowledgeable in the word of God. Please begin to send every issue to me as from now and upwards - **J. A. Ayode.**" - **Nigeria.** (Glad for you to join other readers in Africa - Editor)

"As I have foretold I do not want to be a trouble maker, but I feel if I have questions about some things that are going on I should see to make sure I am being led right. I am a 73 year old widow. I came to the church after having been taught the gospel in its simplicity. Believing, I accepted the gospel call as I could see where I had been wrong all of those years in the Baptist Church for 60 years. Now that I know the truth I feel that I must say something about the things I feel are not scriptural. I get over 50 bulletins per month and read them, attend lectureships, gospel meetings. I ask questions as I want to know....Please pray for me that I can continue in His way. - **Rosie Shepherd.**" (You are to be commended for wanting to know what is right. Having a desire to be right is of great value in keeping in "His way." - Ed.).

"Thank you so much for your excellent paper. The Jan. 2001 issue was in a collection of bulletins from all over that I got from a friend. Please put me on your mailing list. If you have any back issues, I'd like to have any of them. Am especially interested in the upcoming lectures, June 4-7. Don't know if we can come but would very much like to have tapes, audio or video. Hope this small check will help defray expenses - **Mrs. Lucille Krantz.**" - **TN.** (Trust you can attend the lectures. Tapes will be available. I'll pass your name on to the proper one for the tapes. The set of audio tapes is \$26.00 - Ed.)

"Just a note to thank you for all the good work you do on the Banner of Truth. I'm glad God has given you all these insights, to keep us informed all these false teachers in the Lord's church. God bless you - **Charliene Johnson.**" (Having been a member of the Lord's church for almost 50 years, the drastic changes I've seen in recent years is a matter of great concern. It is sad that too many are seemingly not concerned at all - Editor).

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