

When People *Turn Away Their Ears From The Truth*

by Walter Pigg

There is hardly a more timely subject than the above. This is due to the fact that a great many people are *Turn[ing] away their ears from the truth* at a more rapid pace than at any time in my just over fifty years as a member of the Lord's church. As frightening as this is to God-fearing people, it should not come as a total surprise since a number of warnings of this very thing have been sounded out in the New Testament.

In Paul's exhortation to Timothy he says: **Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine** (2 Tim. 4:2). Paul, one of Christ's apostles, and speaking by inspiration, gives a solid reason for the above instruction. Let us note it in detail and with all seriousness.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts will they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Those who do not understand that we are seeing today the very condition of which Paul spoke, are terribly unlearned or not willing to face reality.

Paul had warned earlier in this letter of things which would happen "in the last days," and we now live in those days. Paul said, "**This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.**" (3:1). These perilous times would involve, **Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away** (vs. 4-5).

Paul had warned Timothy in Paul's first letter when he wrote: **Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, ... Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron"** (I Tim. 4:1-2). We are in those "latter times." That a falling away from the truth was bound to happen could not have been set forth in clearer terms. Christ warned of "false prophets." (Matt. 7:15). Paul warns of those who would "pervert" the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9). John said to "try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). Now that we have seen that departing from the faith, or turning away ears from the truth, was predicted by inspiration, let us turn our attention to things which would happen in connection with this departure.

WHEN PEOPLE TURN AWAY THEIR EARS FROM THE TRUTH MANY IMPORTANT THINGS HAPPEN

People often ask, "Why do brethren with a good knowledge of God's word turn away from the truth?" While we may not know all the answers to that serious question, we may know from God's word a number of reasons why this happens. We want to consider a number of those reasons.

We also want to review what happens to the individual who turns away from the truth. Here again, we can know a number of things which happen, thanks to God's word.

It is also very worthwhile to consider things which prevent people from turning away their ears to the truth, an action which foretells their eternal doom unless there is repentance.

WHY DO PEOPLE TURN AWAY THEIR EARS FROM THE TRUTH?

As suggested earlier, we do not know all the answers. We can, however, find a great many answers in God's word. We will not try to exhaust those reasons, but consider a few prominent ones. Others could be considered.

LACK OF DESIRE FOR SPIRITUAL FOOD

The apostle Peter says, "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Pet. 2:2). Just as in the physical realm, when one no longer has a desire for food a serious problem is faced. Without physical food life will not last very long. We all know that. It is just as true that without spiritual food a serious problem is faced. Without that spiritual food one will die spiritually. People die from spiritual malnutrition just as they die from physical malnutrition. When people's interest in Bible study, in Bible classes, sermons, at home, etc. begins to wane that is a symptom of spiritual starvation. Destruction is sure to follow unless the spiritual appetite is restored.

AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF

The writer of Hebrews sounded a serious warning when he said, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). We have all known those who at one time believed God's word, yet for some cause turned away from that belief. A number of things may contribute to such a condition. Therefore, we need to ever be on guard lest we be influenced by evil. Many have fallen because of unbelief. Paul speaks of the "devices" and "wiles" of the devil, and they are many.

TRUSTING IN OPINIONS

Opinions weigh more heavily with a great many than does the plain truth of God's word. We have seen that in the religious world about us for years. That is, these people have opinions about things which they could not prove from God's word if their lives depended on it [their spiritual life does]. We have been critical of such trusting in opinions, and rightly so. But I am reminded of what Paul said, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" (Rom. 2:21). The time has come when more of our brethren than ever, in my time, place opinion above truth! Brethren, how can this be? It is simply a matter of not putting the kingdom of God and His righteousness first (Matt. 6:33).

We are seeing the above in different areas. The church is now involved in a number of activities which are based only on "opinion." This has reached into the work of the church, God-approved worship, belief in the validity of God's word as the only God-ordained authority.

THE LOVE OF THE WORLD

The love of the world goes all the way back to Adam and Eve and the garden of Eden. Since that time men have been lured by worldly things which are not allowed by God's authority. We have never seen a time when our society was more worldly than it is this very day. Not only has society become worldly, it has reached over into the church with great strength.

The love of the world is not compatible with God's truth. Therefore, when the love of the world increases the love of God and spiritual things must decrease. Christ said that man cannot "serve two masters," that "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). The person who is

in love with the world does not want to be bothered by the truth of God, which condemns that person.

The lover of the world doesn't want to hear God's condemnation of his love. In order not to be bothered by God's word he is going to turn away his ears from God's stern warning as set forth by John.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of the Father abideth for ever" (I John 2:15-17).

The hearing of God's truth troubles the conscience of the evildoer, unless that conscience has already become "seared." The way to solve this problem, people erroneously think, is to turn their ears away from the truth. But the truth is still there, even if everyone disobeys it.

LACK OF SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY

The willful lack of participation in spiritual activities is a warning sign of a lack of love for the truth. For example, attending the services of the church contributes to strength, not weakness. A verse which addresses that subject is often overlooked. That verse is Hebrews 10:24. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." An important way of doing this is to attend the church services. When people choose to absent themselves from church activities, because they have something they consider more important, their love for truth is growing cold. Their light may go out. (p. 4)

A great example of lack of love for God's truth is set forth by the writer of Hebrews.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14).

These people had not grown as they should have grown. From the statement that "are become such as need of milk" suggests that not only had they failed to grow as they should, but that they had actually gone backward. This is what happens when love for the truth grows cold. It is a sure recipe for disaster. Activity exercises one's senses to tell the difference between truth and error.

GOD SENDS A STRONG DELUSION

Paul said, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:11-12). Does that mean that God will actually help a person be lost? That is what it clearly says. But why does God do this? In verse 9, we have the answer. "because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Of course, if a person doesn't love the truth, that one is not going to listen the truth, but turn away their ears.

FAILURE TO REASON OR THINK

When Paul enumerates the "Christian virtues" he says, "if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). The idea here is to give serious consideration to these things. Let these things guide your thinking. One thing which contributes to lack of interest in the truth is a failure to give serious thought to what God's word says. There is a difference

between just reading God's word and studying it. One may hear or read the truth and then it go in one ear and out the other. We've heard people say, "Brother so and so has read thee Bible through umpteen times." But that does not mean that God's word has been studied carefully and applied as God intended.

Paul enjoined Timothy to: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). The ASV says "give diligence" and "handling aright the word of truth." This certainly suggest that God's word be studied and correctly applied.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PEOPLE TURN AWAY THEIR EARS FROM THE TRUTH?

Space will allow us to mention only a few of the many. But these should suffice to awaken the person who is spiritually asleep, or drifting in that direction. Consider the following:

Faithful brethren are saddened. It is a sad thing when anyone turns away from the truth, the only means of freedom from sin, but it is sadder still when those we know personally and appreciate turn away and face eternal doom.

They have turned against Christ. Christ said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30). There is no middle ground, one is either for Him or against Him. What could be more against Him that turning one's ears away from the truth which makes one free (Jn. 8:32)? Christ died that men might be saved, but when men turn from His word they are saying Christ died in vain, as far as they are concerned.

They have ceased their "good fight of faith." It is only at the end of the good fight of faith that one lays "hold on eternal life" (I Tim. 6:12). That good fight of faith cannot happen without "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). People cannot fight the fight of faith on the basis of opinion, tradition, hearsay, or subjectivism. How sad it is that people will throw away their "hold on eternal life," the greatest blessing that can ever be. Yet, we have all seen this happen time after time.

Worse off than before gospel obedience. It is hard to imagine anything worse than being lost because of failure to obey the gospel of Christ. Paul says clearly that when the Lord is revealed from heaven it will be "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

As frightening as the above is, note what Peter says in the following passage:

"For if after they have escaped the pollution of this world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered unto the. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that wash to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

How can it be worse for those who have known the way of righteousness, if they turn away from God's word? I must confess that I don't know, but I do know that it will be. God's word says so! My ears listen to the truth.

They have transgressed the doctrine of Christ. "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). When one turns away his ears from the truth, the doctrine

[teaching] of Christ is transgressed. It is only by walking by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7), that one can abide in the teaching of Christ. This faith, which is essential, must come from the hearing of God's word (Rom. 10:17) and not by turning ears from truth. It is a great thing to have [the approval of] the Father and the Son. Without such heaven can never be one's eternal home. If heaven is not one's eternal home, hell will be the eternal abiding place.

Forfeits he benefits of translation and forgiveness of sins. Paul says of the Father that He "...hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14). When an individual is taken from the power of darkness into the kingdom, where forgiveness of sins is enjoyed, this has come about because of the truth which makes men free (Jn. 8:32). This forgiveness of sins cannot be maintained when one ceases to "walk in the light" (1 John 1:7). Walking in the light is contingent upon the hearing of God's word, not in turning away one's ears from it. One can walk by faith only by the hearing of God's word, and without faith, no salvation.

Without the forgiveness of sins one cannot enter the home of the soul, since there "shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie..." (Rev. 21:27).

They become enemies of the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ stands for the way of salvation which has been provided by the sacrifice of Christ. When one is no longer walking in obedience to Christ, the author of eternal salvation to them that obey Him, (Heb. 5:9) that one has become an enemy of the cross. This is reflected in Christ's statement that, "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30).

Paul said, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18). When people turn away their ears from the truth and place their hope in man-made churches, as some of our brethren are doing, they have rejected, become enemies of, the cross of Christ. This happens in other matters as well when ears are turned away from the truth.

They no longer want to hear the truth. Some close their eyes and ears to the truth just because they don't want to hear it. Perhaps we have all known such people, people with whom there is no chance of discussing the truth with them. A special case in point is that of a reader of Banner of Truth, who asked that her name be removed from our mailing list.

The above reader, who claimed to be a member of the church, wrote a very critical letter and made preposterous claims contrary to the truth. She claimed that God talks to her. She did not know who sent her name in to be added to our mailing list. But, she said that her prayers told her that "**it may be**" someone she named. If her prayers "told her" something, it looks like it would have been more certain than just "**it may be.**" I could not reason with her from the pages of God's word!

Why would one, such as the above and others I've heard from, not even want to be exposed to the truth? I don't know the answer, but I have an idea that one's conscience, if it still has any life, would be bothered by the truth. Therefore, rather than have a conscience bothered, the solution is to keep away from the truth.

They may become enemies of the speaker of truth. Paul asked the Galatian brethren the following question: "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). I have, more than once, encouraged those to whom I was speaking to consider "What is said and not who was saying it." It is not uncommon for one who hears the truth to become an enemy of the one who speaks the truth. I know this from personal experience. Some of the most

bitter criticisms that I have received came from those who didn't like what God's word said. They took it out on me personally.

When people reject the truth there is one thing which they should remember. When truth is rejected, the Author of truth is rejected. When Israel wanted a king, in spite of all the warnings from the Lord, the matter displeased Samuel. The Lord told Samuel, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (I Samuel 8:7). When people take their spite out on me because I speak truth which they do not like, I wish for their own good that they would realize they are opposing the Lord.

They qualify to be judged by Christ. A great many people seemingly fail to realize that they will be judged by Christ on the basis of His word, not on people's opinions, feelings, and wishes. Note Christ's words: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). When one's ears are turned away from the words of Christ, there is only one thing that can happen. That person will be judged by Christ. That is, shall be condemned.

They bring shame and reproach upon the body of Christ. They are no longer the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." The Lord's plan includes provisions for dealing with such people when they cannot be brought back to the truth. The provision for dealing with this is called "church discipline." And one of the purposes of church discipline is to bring one to repentance. If this is not accomplished, another purpose is to remove the bad influence of unfaithful members from the church.

Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly..." (2 Thess. 3:6). This instruction is also from Paul. In I Corinthians 5, Paul lists a number of people with whom we are not to keep company, not even to eat with such.

They reject the crown of righteousness. The crown represents the eternal rewards which are in store for those who love and serve the Lord in truth. This is what the Christian race is all about. To lose the crown is the greatest loss possible. When the crown of righteousness is lost, life itself has been a tragedy. But the great loss is not all that is involved. This is borne out by the words of Christ: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29).

One of the most encouraging statements in the New Testament with regard to the crown, is that which is found in Paul's farewell address: "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. 4:7-8). It is a matter of fact that Paul could not have qualified for that crown if he had turned away his ears from the truth.

THINGS WHICH PREVENT THE TURNING AWAY OF EARS FROM THE TRUTH

When Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13), did he not include the maintaining of his faith? Yes. When Peter set forth the Christian graces (2 Pet. 1:1-10), he said, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall." Paul says that he is persuaded that a num-

ber of things shall not be able to separate us from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:37-39)

It is clearly evident that one can remain faithful to the Lord, but that is not without conditions which involve the individual. We shall note a few of those things.

Taking spiritual food for growth. Peter's prescription for spiritual growth is found in the following: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the work, that ye may grow thereby" (I Pet. 2:2). As we have noted before, food is essential for growth, both physically and spiritually. Some have turned away their ears from the truth because they have never grown above the infant stage.

Respect God's law on fellowship. Some turn away from the truth because they fellowship those who don't follow the truth. When people are convinced that they don't have to follow the truth to be accepted by the Lord, they have no reason for listening to the truth.

Don't stake your soul on opinions. A great many no longer require a "thus saith the Lord" to justify faith and practice

Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness first. Things having to do with this must have the highest priority. God is a jealous God and will not take second place.

Count your blessings. Think what God has done for you. The greatest of all, making salvation and eternal life possible. Don't allow the love of the world to crowd out your love for the Lord and His will. Think about what heaven will be worth, and that you can have that home.

CONCLUSION

In Joshua's closing instructions to Israel he said: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth..." (Joshua 24:14). If we do that we will not turn away our ears from the truth that makes men free.

James said, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:19-20). When one turns from the truth, the only remedy is to be converted again. - - *Editor*

Moral Values Had Telling Effect on Election

by *Walter Pigg*

That our society has sunk to its lowest level ever relative to Moral Values is a matter of fact, a stark reality. On the other hand, however, the stand for moral values as evidenced by the recent presidential election is indeed most invigorating. For this we can be most thankful. Out of the storm clouds of immorality came a ray of hope for a return to the moral values which prevailed in our nation decades ago.

The presidential campaign involved a contest between two political parties. The winner would have a great influence on the direction of our society in the future. One party was opting for a purely secular society, where morals are virtually meaningless. I spent more than a year in Ukraine, a country in which secularism prevailed for the life time of most of the people. I saw first hand what it was like. I cringe to even think of our country becoming like theirs. That one party was opting for a secular society was made evident by their large amount of unjust criticism

of religion and belief in God. The denigrating language of critics of Moral Values was no less than appalling. An example of that was cited in the Editorial of the Nov. 11 edition of *The Paducah Sun*:

“By contrast, the Michael Moore-New York Times wing of the Democratic Party looks out across vast stretches of America and sees an alien land populated by dim-witted, gun-totin, Bible-thumping religious fanatics.”

The above is just a small example of the denigrating criticism set forth by the secularist. Those who believe in God and God-ordained moral values are called “religious fanatics,” and many other demeaning terms. The possibility that the secular political party might win, made the recent election the most important in my life, which covers twenty national presidential elections. Many others saw it in the same light.

The other political party in the contest emphasized belief in moral values, which has been in times past a great source of strength to our country and society. The stand of this party for moral values, though severely vilified by the party of secular values, is evidence of strength. That concern for moral values was the most powerful influence in the outcome of the election has been heralded across our country by many. This is indeed an encouraging sign.

It is most encouraging that the vilification of moral values by the secular party has finally struck a nerve of interest in our somewhat decadent society. Much of the evil which has fastened itself upon our society in a near death-grip, is due to the fact that those of us with God-approved moral values have kept our mouths shut. We’ve failed to speak out.

Now that moral America has been awakened from its moral lethargy, it is high time to advance, to stand up and be counted on behalf of moral values. Great strides can be made in bringing back moral sanity to our country if we persevere. This is indeed a noble cause.

If we would stand tall for moral values, we must not allow ourselves to be unmindful and ignorant of Satan’s “devices” (2 Cor. 2:11), or the devil’s “wiles” (Eph. 6:11). Those devices and wiles of the devil work in many ways. Therefore, we should not be unlearned as to the eternal danger involved therein. We believe it would be worthwhile to consider a few of them.

Political Tradition. Our country is run by a form of government which involves politics in virtually every facet of it. This can be a blessing or a curse. Citizens can have so much to do with the direction society takes in general. When a majority of citizens stand for immorality, an immoral society will prevail. On the other hand, when a majority of citizens stand for moral values, moral values will prevail. That is, if the majority lets itself be heard by speaking out with true conviction.

The time was that both of our major political parties had respect for moral values, which served as a plus for our country and way of life. But parties can and do change. This has happened in our country during my time. “My time” covers many more years than that of the majority of citizens.

The secular party of today is altogether different to what it used to be, when it wasn’t secular. Then it stood for moral values as did both parties. Where does Political Tradition come in? some may ask. It comes in when people hold on to their party of years ago, even though it has changed drastically. That one party which once had concern for moral values has virtually no moral values now, as evidenced by the support of such immoral things as abortion and homosexuality. That party has left many people, but some are seemingly unaware and still hold on to it just the same.

The Influence of Materialism. Paul hit the nail square on the head when he said, “For the love of money is the root of all evil [all kinds of evil, ASV]: which while some coveted after,

they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (I Tim. 6:10). We’ve never been affected by materialism as we are at the present time.

There is no doubt but that some have sold their conviction for money or material things. If I remember correctly it was Tennessee Ernie Ford who had a line in a song, “I owe my soul to the company store.” It is crystal clear that some have sold their souls for what the “company store” has to offer, that is, material things. We have all heard it said that, “Some people will do anything for money.” That has never been more truthful than it is today. Money also has a considerable influence in politics.

The Love of Evil. The devil has lured many people through evil ways, such as: dishonesty, greed, laziness, sexual immorality, false teachers and a host of other things. The apostle Peter addresses this in part when he said,

“But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

Lovers of evil do not like the truth because truth testifies against them, while evil doesn’t testify against itself. Truth never supports evil, but some do try to pervert the truth to make it do so.

Politics and Religion Don’t Mix, some say. There is a sense in which the two should not mix. That is when the politics are evil. The Christian cannot, with God’s approval, uphold politicians which are evil. But someone says, “All politicians are evil.” It is a fact that we have no perfect politicians, and need not expect such. But we should be concerned as to which ones are more in keeping with God’s will. This should be the rule by which we make a judgment, rather than by the party of which they are members. We will be judged by God’s word and not by politicians (John 12:48).

The Christian, as a citizen of the country, does have an opportunity to encourage Christian principles by the privilege of voting. We are now faced with a strong political influence which is anti-God and anti-Christianity. We can, through the political process, oppose this evil trend. Contending for the faith (Jude 3) demands this. We should oppose every form of evil, whenever we have the opportunity to do so.

Just stop and think of the end result of the idea that Politics and Religion don’t mix. To the best of my recollection, those I’ve known who were opposed to mixing politics and religion, favored politics which did not uphold moral values, at least in some areas. Therefore, the individual could go ahead and support some evil politicians and fall back on the idea that religions and politics don’t mix. In other words, the idea is that one can divorce political activities from a responsibility toward God. This may account, at least in part, for those who choose to support politicians who oppose God’s word, and feel that they are not held accountable. What is wrong with this? It is false!

I’m still inclined to believe that we have a “silent majority” which does not support such evils as abortion and homosexuality. More of that majority spoke up in the recent election. It was also interesting to note that a great many preachers or “pastors,” spoke out on the subject of moral values this time. This may have put some of our brethren to shame who were not willing to speak out. We should note that even some of the religions today do not stand for moral values. An example of that is those who are promoting homosexuality and so-called “marriage” of homosexuals.

As thankful as I am that moral values spoke as loudly as they did in the election, the battle between morality and immorality is not nearly over. The secular proponents are already singing

their song of a continued struggle. We know from what we have just seen that they will resort to just about anything to accomplish their objective. You see, those who do not respect moral values may do many unfair and dishonest things with a clear conscience.

While our President had about 59 million votes in his favor, just think how many were in opposition to Moral Values prevailing. Their votes numbered about three and a half million less than those for the President. This is indeed a sizeable force, and that there are that many of that persuasion is frightening! Unless those who respect moral values keep up the fight, and recruit others of like mind to speak up, evil could become a majority. We must bear in mind that the devil doesn't rest from his objectives. Those objectives are accomplished through those people who serve him, not God-fearing people.

Some people ask: "Why doesn't the President do away with abortion, since his party is in control of both the House and the Senate." This indicates a lack of understanding as to how our government works. About 1973 abortion was made legal by our Supreme Court. That word "Supreme" means just that. Neither the President nor Congress can overturn the Supreme Court decision. The Supreme Court could overturn their own evil decision, or an amendment to the Constitution could change it. Our President did sign into law a ban on partial-birth abortion, but that could be overturned by the Supreme Court.

A great blessing for those who have moral values would be the doing away with some of the activist judges who have little in the way of moral values. One of the greatest hopes for those on the side of moral values is that Judges who rule on the basis of the Constitution rather than their own ideas will be appointed to the Supreme Court. As great as that would be, it will not be done without a real fight. There are those who will do everything within their power to prevent the appointment of judges who do not go along with the evil of abortion and the upholding of the ungodly act of homosexuality.

Another election will come up in two years. Although this will not be a presidential election, members of Congress will be elected. Moral issues will be involved, just as they were involved in the presidential election. If we treasure moral values as we should, we will let our voices be heard loudly then as well as now.

Forces against God's influence in various areas of life are indeed powerful! But we can overcome those forces if we have a mind to stand up for moral values. I've lived in times when a great majority of people had moral standards which affected their lives, and this included many who did not profess any religion.

May the Lord help us to stand up for Moral Values, and take advantage of our opportunity politically to uphold Godly principles. - - *Editor*

Do You Stand For The Truth?

by *Lloyd Gale*

I suspect that most people believe that they stand for the truth. Even Israel, when in full apostasy, most likely believed that they stood for the truth. The words of Jesus to the multitude seem to fit many today. "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall not see, and shall not perceive" (Matt. 13:14). Anyone whose eyes are open, may easily observe that in certain situations, some have placed limits on their stand for the truth. I am speaking expressly about some members of the Lord's church.

Some stand for the truth except when it comes to divorce and remarriage. This is often due to a situation in regard to some family member or close friend. Some stand for truth, except as it applies to "social drinking." This is often due to personal sin. These brethren will deny that alcohol consumption, for euphoric purpose, is not allowed by God and will oppose the teaching of the truth on alcohol. Some stand for the truth except as it applies to the one body, that is, the one church in which salvation is promised. This may be because they have family or friends who have chosen a humanly originated church. Or it may be due to the effect of Humanism and its poison of tolerance of diversity, that has become politically correct. Some believe that they stand for the truth, just so long as it is positive and not negative. Such will sing the song of the humanist, "Accent The Positive And Eliminate The Negative." Some stand for the truth just so long as it does not expose and condemn their para church organizations. The Disciples of Christ and the Christian church followed this path with their missionary society as today some will defend their Disaster Relief Society.

Before I make mention of another group of Christians, who will stand for the truth except when it comes to their idol, I want to tell you about someone who had to make a difficult decision. This talented young gospel preacher understands what our Lord meant when He said: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37). His father was a denominational preacher. It may be that his grandparents were also members of a man-made church. But he heard the truth and believed the truth and obeyed the truth. He now preaches the truth. It was not easy to depart from his childhood teaching, or his friends and family but it was the right thing to do, and he did it.

That is why it is heartbreaking for me to observe brothers and sisters in Christ whose loyalty to a human institution appears to be greater than their loyalty to Christ, His word and the blood-purchased church. Schools that were established by faithful and well intentioned Christians have now departed from the once delivered faith. And when their evil teachings and practices are exposed they turn against those who shine in the light of truth in darkness. These schools are corrupting the young men and women, who are sent there by well intentioned parents, because they are recommended and defended by brethren who should know better. Is this not a form of idolatry?

Real love for those who are in error demands that they be reprimanded and not supported until repentance and corrections have been made. Let us follow the example of our Lord who during His earthly life, was subject to the Law of Moses. But He did not hesitate to denounce the hypocrisy of His Jewish brethren. On one occasion, after exposing their false doctrine of corban; Jesus spoke these words: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying: This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth ...; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:7-9).

Jesus exemplifies what standing for the truth involves. His denouncing the false doctrine of His Jewish brethren was the highest form of love. His words were direct and no doubt some would say they were harsh. But Jesus knew that deadly sin must be forcefully confronted.

Standing for the truth means that one loves God more than friends, family or any other earthly consideration. **Do you really stand for the truth?**

- - 1186 Martha Levell Rd., Lebanon, TN 37090

The Pharisaic Pigeonhole

by Alan Adams

Has any class of people come close to the centuries-old contempt for and opprobrium attached to those unusual people known in the New Testament as “the Pharisees”?—perhaps the Nazis would. In the final analysis, the Pharisees, generally speaking, were in some sense bad. Yet, it is annoying at best, and contemptible at worst, when, whether ignorantly or willfully, people use the Pharisees to symbolize things that are bad, but for all the wrong reasons. It’s like the Civil War. Thinking southerners are glad our beloved South was defeated; she was wrong about many things. However, it sets one’s teeth on edge to hear the Civil War framed in terms of an equality-loving North waging a holy war against Negro-hating South. Even a History neophyte knows better. The point?—Call bad things bad, but for the right reasons.

There is so much today pigeonholed as “Phariseeism” that in reality has little or nothing to do with the Pharisees of old; and just the mere charge of being a Pharisee can send the accused into a stammering, backpedaling, state of denial. With some, just throw up the word, Pharisee, and that pretty well ends any further discussion of the issue at hand. It’s the same with social/political liberals of our day. Rather than engage in genuine debate in moral philosophical terms on issues such as abortion, homosexuality, and fiscal responsibility, these people find it much easier to refer to their opponents as the “religious right,” or sometimes “the radical religious right.” Anyway, let’s get this Pharisee thing straight.

WHO WERE THEY? *Webster’s New World Dictionary* comes about as close as some, even preaching brethren, in answering this question; which is to say, not terribly close: “An ancient Jewish party ... that carefully observed the written law but also accepted the oral, or traditional law...” Then, under the adjective, “Pharisaic,” they have: “...of the Pharisees [who] emphasize[d] or observ[ed] the letter but not the spirit of religious law; self-righteous, sanctimonious; [who] pretend[ed] to be highly moral or virtuous without actually being so; hypocritical.”

There are several problems with these comments:

“Ancient” might be a bit too elastic to describe the Pharisees. Moving from Malachi to Matthew, one’s attention is called to the “sudden” appearance of people and things seemingly Jewish, yet not found in the Old Testament. We meet Sadducees, Pharisees, Herodians, and Lawyers. It was somewhere during the four hundred years between Malachi and the events unfolded in the Gospels, that these groups, as well as their peculiar doctrines and practices arose.

To say that the Pharisees “carefully observed the written law” is also quite a stretch. I believe it was Jesus, whom the Pharisees generally loathed, who said of the “written law”:

Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away

from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Now, it does stand to reason that the Master who uttered these words about the Law, would have been in conflict with people who “carefully observed the written law?” No. The Pharisees, like every present day sect, were more devoted to their peculiar creeds and catechisms than to the Divinely inspired “written law.” In truth: *Whether Old Testament then, or New Testament now; there’s no such thing as being at fault because you’re too careful about observing the written law.*

Webster also uses that old, tired *nonbiblical* cliché to describe the Pharisees: They “ob-serv[ed] the letter but not the spirit of religious law.” In the Bible there is no such thing as two levels of Divine Law: that is, a “spirit” level which is superior to the mere “letter” level. This whole idea comes from a misinterpretation of three passages (Romans 2:25-29; 7:1-6; 2 Corinthians 3:1-11) which variously use the terms: spirit, letter, and law, to draw a contrast **not** between two levels of Divine law, rather between two Divinely given laws: the Law of Moses, and the superior Law of Christ.

What is meant by this letter-but-not-the-spirit characterization of the Pharisees is the idea that they were so overly concerned about the “jots” and “tittles” of the Law like sacrifices and tithes that they failed to pay any attention to the really important stuff like compassion, mercy, and love. In reality, a good reading of the Old Testament will bear out the fact that there are “jots” and “tittles” which deal with both the outward and the inward parts of the truly religious man. This is why Jesus said to the Pharisees,

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone (Matthew 23:23)

Nobody has the right to decide which “jots” and “tittles” of Divine Law which he will heed to the exclusion of other “jots” and “tittles.” The Pharisees were condemned in this instance precisely because they arrogated to themselves the right to pick and choose.

The rest of what Webster says pretty well comports with the facts. The Pharisees did “accept ... the oral, or traditional law,” and they were “self-righteous, sanctimonious; [who] pretend[ed] to be highly moral or virtuous without actually being so; hypocritical.”

These people, just like sectarians of our day, put their own twist on Scripture. Jesus warned against the so-called “righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” (Matthew 5:20). Then in the rest of the chapter he gave examples of *their righteousness*. Notice how often he used the lead phrase, “Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time.” Emphasis here lies on the word “heard.” In other words, these were things that the scribes and Pharisees *said* were taught by the Law of Moses, which in fact were not.

Many times these people elevated their own doctrines to the point that they made “void the word of God by *their* tradition,” of which traditions Jesus said, “which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do” (Mark 7:13). They made void their “worship” by “teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men” (Matthew 15:9). Not only did they make up their own rules, even to the point of circumventing God’s rules, they didn’t even follow their own rules; for which Je-

sus condemned them by saying, "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger" (23:4).

PRESENT-DAY PHARISAIC PIGENHOLING. In the church, so often when one is critical of, or calls into question the biblical correctness of, some brethren's teaching or practice, he will be pegged as a Pharisee. If that is Phariseism, why was the Lord not a Pharisee? Rather than debate the issue that prompts criticism, it's just so much easier to wave the magic wand of: "Pharisee."

The charge, "Pharisee," is sometimes applied to brethren who are opposed to outward shows of zeal and emotion, particularly in worship. This Pharisaic trait supposedly is seen in the Pharisees' criticism of the rejoicing going on during the Triumphal Entry:

Pharisees ... said unto him ... rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said, I tell you that, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out (Luke 19:39-40).

The Pharisees weren't concerned with the emotion and zeal of the disciples here, rather with what they were saying: "Blessed is the Kind that cometh in the name of the Lord." Besides, this charge doesn't fit the Pharisees at all. They were the very people who were fond of "trumpets," "street corners," and "disfigured" faces (Matthew 6). I must admit here, that I, like the Lord, am opposed to unscriptural, unnecessary, ostentatious, meaningless, trite, and disconcerting outward displays of religious emotion and fervor.

Most egregious of all Pharisaic pigeonholing is that of applying the term Pharisee to "conservative" brethren, when the moniker far better fits our liberal, loving, innovative brethren. These are the folks who have created their own *nonbiblical* terminology ("our fellowship," "belief fellowship," etc.). They are the ones who are so adept at phony, outward, and pretentious crying, shouting, and swaying. They are the ones who make up their own rules as to what loving, kind, and compassionate; and they, hypocritically, will not ever abide by them.

Call a spade a spade, and a Pharisee a Pharisee when it's needed. Just be sure you know what you are calling someone.

Happy Holidays
To our readers and
all those who have a part in getting
banner of truth in the mail

We especially thank
those at Dexter and
Hickory Grove who give of their time.

Our sincere thanks go
out to all those who supply the finances necessary to make our work possible, allowing thousands to hear the truth.

Our prayers go out for all those above that they may have a safe and enjoyable holiday season
and a prosperous year in 2005.

For the cause of Christ,

Walter and Naomi Pigg

Correction: In the October issue of BOT, I made a statement on page six which was incorrect. I stated, "The time was that a politician running on the basis of supporting such evil would have gotten no more votes than Norman Thomas who ran for president on the Communist ticket." Instead of Norman Thomas that should have been Gus Hall. Thomas ran for president on the Socialist ticket six or seven times. Hall ran on the Communist ticket five times. – Editor

Response from a Confused Reader

Mr. Pigg, Just an email to ask to be removed from the mailing list of your publication. I have been greatly saddened reading all of the articles in this recent publication. My heartfelt prayers will be lifted up for you and all who are involved with this ministry that God will work on your hearts and let your eyes be opened to a greater understanding of His truths and His will for His church in the world we are currently living. I know where your beliefs are founded because I was formerly on the same beliefs and had the same understands of what I **thought** scripture said (and also a misunderstanding of what I thought **ALL** other denominations believed). Know I am so relieved that God has revealed to me that I don't have a "corner on the market" of truth. That he has worked on my heart to reveal love and understanding through His holy word and is still working on me even now 20 years later.

My first human thought was to continue to receive the publication and throw it in the garage can, but God spoke to my heart (I'm sure that is against your "beliefs" as is was against my former beliefs as well) and let me know that that would be wasting His money.

We are all in a war against satan and if we speak for Christ we can not also speak for satan as well. So if the Methodist, Baptist or any other with man made names, not always beliefs, what to give a cup of water for Jesus name they will not lose their reward. (Mark 9:38-41)

Because of His love, Renee Bennett – End of letter.

The above is exact, including typos, etc. – Ed. See next page for my response to the above letter.

The following is my reply to the above letter.

Dear Renee, I will remove your name from our mailing list. I do appreciate your letting me know. I hated to hear that you have started listening to what you believe is God talking to you in some way other than by His word. I know that many have the belief that you express, and yet they believe many different things. If God is talking to people in some way other than by His word, then He is not saying the same thing to everyone. I would truly be afraid to imply that God talks to different people and tells them different things

Renee, I believe in following God's word. Christ says we are going to be judged by His word, not by what God says apart from His word (John 12:48). I also base my faith on the hearing of God's word (Rom. 10:17). I'm sorry that you have been led to believe that you can be saved through a man-made church. God's word says he has only one. Christ built that one and died to purchase it. I feel sorry that you now believe God is telling you something contrary to His written word. I pray that you will think seriously, and let God speak to you through His written word, since we are going to be judged by it. Now that you are not abiding in the "doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9) you do not have God's approval. I pray that you will not allow your life to end, rejecting

what Christ teaches. For the cause of Christ, Walter W. Pigg.

NOTE: The above is what I sent to Renee Bennett. In a further exchange with her, she only confirmed her strange thinking. For example, she said she didn't know who sent in her name to be put on the mailing list. I told her it was probably someone who was being a true friend to her by helping her know the truth. She responded as follows: "My prayers reveal to me that it may be _____ who is a minister...." He has long hated my family since we don't see everything just as He does, not as God word plainly says...."

Her guidance by her "prayers" said "it may be" a certain person. That is not very reliable guidance if it is only "**it may be**" information.

My response was not only an effort to cause this person to think, it was also an effort to help others see how people turn away from the truth. Those who turn away from the truth as this person has done are very difficult to reason with and convert. – *Editor*

READERS' RESPONSE

"It has been quite some time since I wrote you and my comments are way late but I do want you to know how much I appreciate you and the work you are doing. Have learned over the past 4 months what it is like to be shut-in and have to depend upon audio tapes for 'attendance' at worship services....There are not enough words of gratitude to express my feeling about the work you are doing. I am enclosing a small check to assist in any way you need or wish. also would you please add three more name to the mailing list – **Lucille Krantz.**" – **TN.** (*We trust you are doing better by now from your surgery. I can certainly relate to those who miss being able to attend worship services, when some seem not to care when they are plenty able to be there, if they had the desire to be. Thanks for you interest and help – Editor*).

"We are thankful for Banner of Truth. We're thankful for you and Naomi and the work you do in putting this paper out. And we hope you will be able to continue to do so. The Downtown congregation appreciates you sending the paper to us – **Downtown church of Christ.**" – **AR.**

"Harold and I receive your bulletin and thank our God for your stand in the Truth. The older generation is shocked every day by some of the teaching that is being printed and mailed out. I cannot understand the elders bowing to the whims of the congregation. We older people need to keep the prayer doors open. We enjoy you bulletin and glad to assist – **Harold and Kitty Wood.**" – **TN.** (*In general the older generation saw things quite differently from what the younger generation often sees things. I've seen a lot of changes in my more than 50 years of preaching. Most of what I'm seeing is not for good. I'm encouraged when those older people speak up in defense of what they know to be the truth. Thanks for you help – Editor*).

"I don't know how you got our address or why you started sending us your pamphlets. We do not want to receive your pamphlets. Please take me off your mailing list **Jack Freeman.**" – **TN.**

"We enjoy Banner of Truth. We have also sent the name of several of our friends. They all enjoy it so much. Please keep up the good work. I am sending you a check for \$20 to help with your expenses – **Robert & Bernice Harrison.**" – **AL.** (*Thanks for sending us the name of friends for our mailing list. This helps us in building a mailing list of people who want to receive Banner of Truth. Thanks, also, for your help for our work – Editor*).

"I recently met a bro. from Wyoming. It was a pleasant experience. He informed me that they were battling liberalism just as we are. Thus I would appreciate you adding him to your mailing list for BOT. – **Bill Clayton.**"

"Return to sender. I request no more letters – **Cynthia Allman.**" – **TN.** (*Thanks for letting us know – Editor*)

"Thank you for the information on the NIV. Even one error in God's word is not acceptable. I

had no idea the NIV was as perverted as it is. I also believe God will take care of this problem. What makes man think he can get away with this. The old devil does his job real well – too well. Things in the desert are coming together. We have almost finished our base camp and are about to start our site defense. This will take some time. The heat has finally broke a little bit. Most of the work will be done at night, because it does cool off at night quite well. Your article on baptism is one of the best I have ever read. May the God of heaven continue to bless your work – **Lewis Smith.” – Iraq.** (*Our prayers are for your safety while in that country so far away from home. The enemy there would also be an enemy to us here at home. This is an example of just how evil religion can be when it serves the wrong God. May the Lord richly bless you and family – Editor*).

“Please remove my name from your mailing list. Thanks, - **Oneal Grant.” – GA.**

“I encourage you to stand the ground, continue to fight the good fight, and not compromise God’s word. Banner of Truth is an inspiration to me and others who love the truth to be taught. The August issue on Baptism was excellent. I carry it with me so that it may be used as a tool to help someone better understand. You, your wife, and Banner of Truth are worthy of support from we as individuals (not whole congregations necessarily). As we are “the church” it is our duty and responsibility to uphold you in whatever monetary means we can. I am sorry that you have to “ask” for help. It should not be so. Maybe this contribution will help in some way – **Marsha Roberts.” – TX.** (*Thanks for your encouragement to stand the ground and continue to fight the good fight, and not compromise. It is so sad to see people who know better, water down the truth and fail to stand up for it. A number of people are responding to our request for help as we thought they would. Since only those who have a part in our personal support receive that financial statement, only a few of our readers knew that we had lost so much support, due to our failure to compromise the truth. Thanks so much for your concern and your help – Editor*).

Notice! Notice! Editor’s e-mail address has changed to the following
wpiggbot@myshadetree.com

Visit BOT at David Lemmons’ website:

<http://BOT.LemmonsAid.net>

Readers may get on David’s *LemmonsAid*: e-mail:

LemmonsAid-subscribe@YahooGroups.com

Address Changing? Do let us know!