

Banner of Truth

"The truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

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Will America Suffer God's Wrath?

[EDITOR'S NOTE]: The following article entitled as above was written almost fifteen years ago and carried in Banner of Truth. It contains quite a few negatives, as does the New Testament. While some declare they "don't like negatives," it is high time that we give heed to negatives as well as positives. Our discussion also includes the positives which are the prerogatives of those who make the victory of faith their highest priority. As I reread the article, I was reminded of how more timely it is now than it was fifteen years ago. Unparalleled indifference escalates, and hardly a day passes that does not call attention to the worsening of our society's morals. If ever there was a time when we should stop and take stock of our serving God, it is *now*. The "perilous times" characteristic of the entire Christian Age have never been more obvious.

Some of the time references will appear to be misplaced or out of place; please keep in mind the time frame (1993) during which it was written.

In God's revealed will, contained only in the Bible, there is overwhelming and irrefutable evidence that God's wrath will be suffered by a nation or people which continues to pursue the course which America is now rapidly pursuing. It is not a matter of whether it will happen, only a matter of *how* and *when* it will occur. But, there is a bright side for the God-fearing individual; that is, God's faithful servants can take unfaltering courage in the divine assurance that victory will ultimately be theirs as overcomers who have "escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 2:20).

A careful examination and consideration of the present deplorable moral state of our nation and

the proper application of God's word relative to the matter will clearly justify the conclusion reached: America is a people now ripe for destruction. Let us first consider,

I. THE MORAL STATE OF OUR COUNTRY

The evidence of the horrific moral decline of our nation is so extensive that we can only consider a small part of it. But, we begin by reflecting upon history. From history we learn that the mighty Roman Empire into which Christianity was born, was in many respects very similar to today's America, the most powerful nation in the world. Permeating moral corruption and decay caused the the Roman Empire to cease to exist. In more →

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recent times, Alexander Solzhenitsyn says that those who lived through the Bolshevik takeover in Russia attributed the terrible tragedy to the fact that "men have forgotten God," saying, "that's why all these things happened." We have just witnessed the breakup of the former Soviet Union after seventy years of godless rule by atheistic communism. Cal Thomas, a syndicated columnist, wrote, "A common malady of many nations that collapsed internally...was a melting of the moral resolve." Another writer, a former government official, said, "There has never been a case in history in which society has been able to survive for long without a strong moral code...Recovering our moral code — our religious truth — is the only way our society can survive." From the Bible, we learn that Israel was brought to her knees time after time due to their forgetting

God and going astray. In view of what has happened in the past, if we think America can never fall as a nation, we have another thought coming. And whether we fall as a nation, God's wrath will surely come upon the disobedient. Let us first consider a few of the areas relating to America's moral condition.

A. Concerted Effort to Extinguish All Christian Influence

Who would have thought forty years ago that our country, which prided itself as a "Christian Nation," heavily influenced by christian principles, would now be suffering from a powerful effort to extinguish the christian influence of those who believe in God? This effort began in a pronounced way in the early 1960s when prayer and the Bible and its influence were removed from the schools. Another giant step was taken in the *Roe vs. Wade* decision by the Supreme Court. In recent times we have been hearing a lot about the "ethnic cleansing" which is taking place in Bosnia. Well, there is an attempted "cleansing" underway in our country. Its objective is to cleanse our society of christian influence. Tragically, some who claim to believe in God are apparently unaware of this anti-God effort, though the valid evidence is abundant to the observing person. It is sadly ironic that we as a nation are gravitating toward the condition which has existed, and failed, in Eastern Europe. They now want the Bible taught to their people and a strong element here wants to do away with the Bible and its godly influence.

The News Media. For the most part it is ultra liberal with respect to God and christian influence. A case in point is the way the media often characterizes those who uphold traditional family and moral values. They are put down as poor, ignorant, uneducated radicals of the "religious right," or sometimes the "radical religious right." The media bias is so evident in the upholding or leaning toward that which is far out morally. 1

The Entertainment Industry. Various surveys have revealed that the great majority of the Hollywood clan have very low moral standards, and their productions by way of movies, TV shows, etc. attest to that fact. Programs which do not run counter to godly principles are a pitifully few. Even country music has reached a new low in upholding immorality and indecency.

The Printed Page. The *Washington Times*, 3/25/93, reports that Janet Reno expects to close down obscenity cases, with the exception of the most vile child pornography. The lewd and lustful are often prominent in today's writings, magazines, etc. Pornography is a big business as the demands of the ungodly are supplied. Lewd literature is available to almost everyone who wants it. Base and vulgar literature, pictures, etc. as so commonplace today whereas not too many years ago such would have been strictly illegal. The influence of such is clearly seen.

Our Schools. Evolution and atheism can be taught, dishonesty winked at, and sexual immorality encouraged in our schools, but God must be left out of the picture. Many of the Devil's ways are given free course, but God's ways are off limits and must legally be avoided. The true God is treated as evil.

Our Legal System. It was largely built upon the principle *in God we trust*, but we have seen great departures from that principle. For years now efforts have been made to completely secularize our country. Immorality is being "legislated" as more laws based on Godly principles are overturned. A court in Louisiana declared "unconstitutional" a sex-education curriculum which suggested "abstinence" as a means of preventing unwanted pregnancies and diseases. This was supposedly because it was related to "religious beliefs and moral judgments." How ridiculous. If promiscuity had been suggested, that would have caused no problem.

B. An All Time Low in Morality

The line between right and wrong is becoming dimmer all the time. A growing number of people "call evil good, and good evil and...put darkness for light and light for darkness" (Isa. 5:20). Former Education Secretary, William Bennett, reported in *USA Today*, 3/16/93, that U.S. "values" have deteriorated since 1960: *Violent crime increased by 560%. *Illegitimate births climbed by 419%. *Divorce rates quadrupled. *Teenage suicide jumped by 200%." To turn these numbers around, Bennett says, "We must engage in the time-honored task of moral education of our young (and the teaching of) values such as self-restraint, respect for other people, the importance of family and self-control." Crime, such as murder, robbery, rape, theft, child abuse, et al, continues to increase. Truth and honesty are not cherished as they once were.

Sexual immorality has never been so pronounced in the history of our nation. We have reached a state of godless heathenism and a frightening number of people love to have it so. The millions living together without marriage are seen as "another life style." *The New York Times* reported that 30 years ago, one in very 40 white children was born to an unmarried mother. Today it is reported to be 1 in 5. Among black children, it is 2 out of 3. We are told that 45% of all children born in New York City are born out of wedlock. The unconcern of society is a disturbing matter. Rather than becoming outraged at the mention of shameful and ungodly deeds, people only laugh. Society has to a great degree been desensitized when it comes to moral issues. This can only lead to a worsening state.

Blame for wrongdoing is not accepted by individuals. It is society which is to be blamed as being at fault. Poverty is blamed for the lowdown ungodliness in some areas of crime and lawlessness. But if poverty were to blame, how did any of us who lived during the Great Depression →

of the 1930s even survive? Until blame for wrongdoing is placed where it rightfully belongs, upon the individual, little progress will be made in reducing it.

Abortion is another black mark upon our country. It is a reflection of the lack of respect for the sanctity of life, which is seen in many today, beginning with the President of our country, who is committed to murder of untold millions of innocent unborn boys and girls by abortion. He has pledged his support of FOCA (Freedom of Choice Act). If passed, this will allow abortion on demand at any point before birth. This will apply to all fifty states and territories, and will render void any state law which in any way restricts abortion for any reason. Euthanasia is being advocated by a growing number of people. We are very close to the conditions described in Romans chapter one.

C. Sexual Perversion Is Being Forced upon Our Nation

“Sin is sin,” in the sense that breaking God’s law is sin (I Jno. 3:4), but some sins represent a worse state of overall degradation than others. Sexual perversion is such a sin. Due to the fact that homosexuality represents about the lowest state to which a nation or people can go, we are giving more attention to it trusting that we might awaken some to the sobering reality of our condition.

Homosexuality was an abomination under the law of Moses (Lev. 18:22), and was punishable by death (Lev. 20:13). The Lord rained brimstone and fire upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their grievous sins which certainly included sexual perversion (Gen. 19). Homosexuality is also strongly condemned in the New Testament. Paul speaks of a people “professing themselves to be wise, [yet] they became fools” (Rom. 1: 22); they “changed the truth of God into a lie” (v. 25), and by God were given up “unto vile affections” which are against nature.” The “the vile

affections” were acts of homosexuality (vv. 26, 27). Paul says those people “did not like to retain God in their knowledge...[that though] ... knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (vv. 28-32). The same apostle says that “abusers of themselves with mankind” (homosexuals) shall not “inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 6:9-10). These words of Paul should serve as a warning for today as they did for the Romans and the Corinthians then.

Facing the Facts. The frightening facts of the deplorable state of our country must be faced, like it or not. Though we can only touch the tip of the iceberg, so to speak, we begin with the President of our country, Bill Clinton. It is a time for weeping on the part of god-fearing people when the President is so obsessed with sexual perversion that he is wholly committed to those who practice this ungodliness and is putting forth an almost unlimited effort to encourage this sin and foist it upon those who still believe in God and christian principles. He has declared his determination to force the homosexuals upon the military of our country, against the advice of those men who have experience and who want this country to have a strong military force. Clinton did an infamous first when he received a delegation of gay and lesbian activists at the White House. He appointed Roberta Achtenberg to the post of Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity with the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development. Achtenberg is described as “A radical lesbian activist from San Francisco.” She is also said to be hostile toward those who do not accept her lesbianism. In her position, she is expected to use her power to force the acceptance of homosexuals with regard to housing, which could mean property owners (including christians) would have to rent to homosexual couples, unmarried couples, etc. This lesbian has served in high

positions in the homosexual community, such as Executive Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Inc., Directing Attorney of the Lesbian Rights Project of Equal Rights., and National Co-Chair of the Clinton for President Campaign. She may also be remembered for her opposition to the Boy Scouts for failing to accept homosexuals as leaders, etc.

President Clinton's inaugural parade was infested with homosexuals. Homosexuals were invited to provide entertainment for the parade.

List Strongin, president of the Lesbian and Gay Bands of America, was bursting with pride. "It is obviously historical because it's the first time any openly gay or lesbian group has participated at the invitation of the administration," Strongin said. Also, a lesbian couple from Dallas rode a float dedicated to American families in the parade, a symbol to show that Clinton accepts the homosexual standard that two homosexuals living together constitute a family and serve the same benefits as the traditional family.

[The information about Roberta Achtenberg and the preceding quotation came from the *AFA Journal*, 3/93.]

Consider also,

New York Mayor David Dinkins has signed an executive order to allow unmarried couples – including homosexuals – to register as domestic partners with the City Clerk. He called it a "major step toward ensuring that the thousands of individuals involved in long term committed and caring relationships are extended the same rights as individuals bonded through the traditional concept of the family unity." [AP, 1/18,93, via *AFA Journal*, 3/93.]

According to a report by *National Review* [6/7/93, p. 52], the Hawaiian Supreme Court has legitimized homosexual marriages. *Newsweek*, 5/10/93, carries an article, *An 'Explosion' of Gay Writing*, suggesting that there is an increase in the promotion of the practice through the printed page.

AFA Journal, 6/93, reprints the following from the *Princeton Alumni*, 4/21/93: "Princeton University will no longer support Boy Scouts through the local United Way because the Scouts will not accept homosexual scout leaders."

The degrading homosexual march, in April, which "took over Washington, D.C.," for a few hours, though far short of what the homosexuals had boasted they would have, and which the news media had given such a favorable billing, represents a new low in morals in America. Though Clinton was not present, he gave the event his stamp of approval. With the number of marchers numbered at 300,000 or less, the event is nonetheless a reminder of Sodom and Gomorrah. Joseph Farah wrote,

The demonstration resembled not so much a civil rights march as a carnival sideshow. Nevertheless, the major print and broadcast media put the best possible spin on the event, downplaying the disappointing numbers, the vulgarity, the obscenity, the foppish stereotypical behavior, the public sex and outrageousness of many of the speakers and performers. [*AFA Journal*, June 1993.]

Concerning the homosexual march, *Newsweek* reported,

During last month's massive gay-rights march in Washington, 1,500 homosexual couples participated in a "wedding" replete with ministers and rice. The vows weren't binding, but the point was made...But more and more homosexual pairs are becoming parents, which creates a paradox; if gays can have children but cannot marry, what kind of bastardized definition of family is society imposing on their offspring? [May 24, 1993.]

Religious Sanction. Sexual perversion is being promoted in the name of religion. Those who claim to believe in God, calling themselves christians, are flying in the face of God by promoting that which God condemns. Garth Brooks, claiming to be religious, saying, "I love the Bible," is at the same time a member of "Parents and →

Friends of Lesbians and Gays,” and promotes homosexuality in his singing. United Methodist Bishop, Melvin G. Talbert, joined the league of sexual progressives calling on President Bill Clinton to keep his campaign promise to lift the military ban on homosexuals. “St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church announced that it would withhold its support of gay and lesbian group called the Lazarus Project” (*AP*, 4/20/93, via *AFA Journal*). Michael Meyer and Kenneth L. Woodward, discuss the opposition to Gay Rights in Colorado Springs, via a *Newsweek* article, 3/1/93. The bottom line of their comments, which favor the sexual perverts, says that if the city wants to be the evangelical capitol of America, the Christians must “get back to first principles, which they define as loving their neighbors as themselves.” But the love which God’s word upholds, opposes sin of every kind, certainly homosexuality.

Homosexuality Taught in School. Joseph Fernandez gained some prominence a few months ago due to his favored curriculum which taught first graders tolerance for homosexuals. As Chancellor of New York City Schools, Fernandez became known as “King C——,” leading New York City to become the first city to distribute prophylactics in schools. His contact with the nation’s largest school system ends this month, but the school board only voted 4 to 3 to dismiss him, and that was only after the Catholic Church became vigorous in its opposition to him.

Cal Thomas (not even a New Testament Christian, as far as I know), makes a great observation when he said, “The open celebration of homosexuality represents the final disconnect from a personal God. If the barrier against societal acceptance of homosexuality falls, there will be no other that can stand.” He also spoke about the shameful “march on Washington” by gays and lesbians saying,

The shameless promotion of sexual immorality in the streets of our nation’s Capital and the public blessing bestowed upon it by the president are the latest in a mountain of evidence that proves this nation has forgotten God and is exposing itself to the grave consequences that historically have followed spiritual amnesia.

II. God’s Wrath Upon The Disobedient

Paul lists a number of sins which are prevalent today saying, “For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience” (Col. 3:5-6). In another list, he says, “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience” (Eph. 5:5-6). And, yet again, he warns, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). Included in the catalogue of “unrighteousness” is the sin of sexual perversion, to which God “gave them up.” From the above passages we may make some serious observations: 1) America is in general a disobedient people; 2) There are many people out to deceive us with vain words; and, 3) Truth, as never before in America, is being held in unrighteousness. This alone should suffice for us to conclude that we are in line to be recipients of God’s wrath. But there is much more.

The Psalmist declares, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all nations that forget God” (Ps. 9:17). So many of our people, as though having a “conscience [which] is seared (I Tim. 4:1-2), are turning from faith in God, willfully ignoring Him. The wise man, Solomon, wrote: “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). America’s reproach because of sin has never been so great, and conditions are worsening day by day. The apostle Paul sets forth a principle which applies to all, “But unto them that are contentious, and do not 1

obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath” (Rom. 2:8). This includes America.

Not only will those in false religions, and the unfaithful within the church, ultimately suffer God’s wrath, those who make no effort at all to serve God will suffer the same. From him “that sat upon the throne,” John received the following words: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and the murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). Paul writes of the Lord Jesus being revealed from heaven, “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Whether or not God’s wrath comes upon our country as a whole in the fall of the nation, wherein the innocent could suffer because of the deeds of the wicked, makes little difference. But that His wrath will come upon every disobedient individual leaves no room for questioning. This wrath, however, will not keep the faithful servant from his eternal inheritance. This is indeed a positive fact that should encourage the faithful as they serve God.

III. Victory for the Faithful Is Assured

Time after time God, who cannot lie, assures His faithful servants of victory. This makes possible a true hope, which serves as “an anchor of the soul” (Heb. 6:19) and which sustains the true christian as battles are fought and won in the pursuit of eternal victory. We can see why Paul exhorted the Corinthians to “always abound in the work of the Lord” (I Cor. 15:58).

A very significant point which stands out in each of the seven letters to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1-3) is that victory is assured to “him that overcometh.” The eternal Christ reinforces that

assurance saying, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14). In the great judgment scene as recorded in Matthew chapter twenty-five, when before Christ “shall be gathered all nations” (v. 32), Christ says of those who had faithfully served Him, that they would go away “into life eternal” (v. 46).

In Romans chapter eight, Paul gives assurance of the Christian’s hope. In this connection, he mentions the horror of being separated “from the love of Christ.” Naming a great many things which could not separate the christian, including tribulation, distress,, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, he concludes, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (vv. 35-37). The christian has grounds upon which to be emboldened and confident. If he walks “in the light as he is in the light” (I Jno. 1:7), takes care to avoid “an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12), then no power can take from him that eternal inheritance.

For those who long for and would enjoy the beauty and grandeur of that eternal home of the soul, there is no better example to emulate than that of the great apostle Paul. He underwent many severe trial and tribulations, knowing whom he had believed, being “persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12). The results of his unflinching faith, which can be ours as faithful Christians, are set forth in his great farewell to Timothy, his “own son in the faith.” Realizing that his departure from this life was near, Paul said: “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 that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 2:7-8). —*Editor*

Muslims Outnumber Catholics

Catholic authorities announced recently that Islam is now larger than Catholicism. Muslims number just over 19% of the world's population, while Catholics number just over 17% of the world population. Islam is said to be the fastest growing religion in the world. This is also true in our own country.

These facts have something to say with regard to our discussion of God's Wrath on America. Here are two religions, making up in size the first and second largest religions of the world. Another fact of the matter is that neither of these religions has God's approval. The same can be said of so many religions which are less in number.

Islam had its beginning in the 600s A.D. It is a religion of the sword. Its gains have been made in a great part by the subjugation of masses of people, who were given the choice of converting to Islam or having their heads removed. Islam's objective is the control of the world. They make no bones about it. Yet some of our people who should know better, see Islam as a peaceful religion. A question often arises, Just how naive can some people be? Well, there seems to be no limit with some. Islam is behind almost all the terrorist activities which are now plaguing many people in the world.

What About Catholicism? This second largest religion in the world, started well this side of the First Century, as did Islam. God's word knows nothing about a pope, other than warning against such people as a pope. When people combine man-made traditions with some of God's word, as Catholics do, just about anything can be justified. But it does not stand the test of God's authoritative word. A couple of days ago the pope came to the U.S. for a visit. This got the attention of just about every form of news. I noted at one point, a person bowing down to the pope, as if he were some great one, as he indeed claims to be. This reminded me of the account of Cornelius bowing down at the feet of Peter, and worshipping him. But

this occasion was far different to what I saw on TV concerning the pope. Peter let Cornelius know that he (Peter) was a man also. Scripture says, "Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself am also a man" (Acts 10:26).

I have never heard of a pope doing what Peter did with regard to Cornelius. That is, I have never seen him tell a man not to fall down at his feet. But there is a great difference between the pope and the apostle Peter. You see, the pope claims to be the "vicar" of Christ on earth, actually taking the place of Christ. But the fact of the matter is that many things which Catholics teach and practice are clearly condemned by Christ, or have no authority from Christ. —*Editor*

What If...?

The New Testament is replete with references to the many things which Christians suffered in the First Century. To the angel of the church in Smyrna, Christ warns of persecution, and told the Christians to "be faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10). This meant that they would have to face becoming a martyr. Faithful to the point of dying for Christ.

What If we were faced with a similar situation today? How would we react? And, the possibility of our being persecuted as Christians is growing day by day, and strong forces are trying to remove God from our society. What If we are threatened for speaking against homosexuality? What would we do? God's word tells us what we should do. We are to obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29). But would we do that God's word teaches to do?

While teaching in Ukraine I was told that when Communism took over the country, some of the Catholics simply went along with Communism in order to continue. Do you suppose that some of us might do the same thing? One reason that I believe we would, is that some within the church are compromising their convictions to go along with man-made churches. If one will compromise the truth for that reason. No doubt, if some of our brethren were faced by a law which forbids some of our matters of faith, they would compromise. —*Editor*

Jesus and the Woman (John 8)

Don Arbaugh

It was early in the morning,
To the temple He did go.
He sat down to teach the people
Because He loved them so.

But the Pharisees brought Him a woman
And they divulged a sordid fact.
She had been taken in adultery,
Taken in the very act!

Now Moses in the law commanded
That she should be stoned in such a case,
But what sayest thou O' Master,
Just what penalty should she face?

This they said in order to tempt Him,
To accuse Him was their game.
They had even sought to kill Him
Because He had put them all to shame.

But Jesus stooped and with His finger
Began to write upon the ground,
Just as though He had not heard them
For he did with wisdom abound.

They continued asking for an answer,
How for her sin she must atone?
Jesus said, Let the sinless one among you
Be the first to cast a stone.

While He waited for an answer,
Again, He wrote upon the ground.
Then when He looked, He saw the woman
But no accusers could be found!

For they that heard Him were convicted
And departed one by one.
It was their conscience that condemned them;
They were no match for God's Son!

Now the accusers have all left them.
Jesus and the woman are alone.
And the woman is now standing,
Standing as before a throne.

Jesus asked, "Doth none condemn thee?"
And she said, "No man Lord."
Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee,
God thy way and sin no more.

As you travel life's pathway
And you realize you have sinned,
Let your soul be cleansed by Jesus
And you will have peace within.

He has promised to forgive you
If you will His Word obey.
Why not believe, repent, confess Him,
Be baptized into Him today?

You will then be a new creature,
Cleansed of every spot and stain.
Walking in the narrow pathway,
Eternal life is yours to gain.

As a babe, you're sure to stumble.
Don't give up, keep up the fight!
He has promised continual cleansing
If you keep walking in the light.

He will never leave thee or forsake thee,
He will always be your friend..
Then when this life is over,
You too, can stand there, uncondemned!

—2156 Grange Hall Road, Beavercreek, OH 45431

The Deceitfulness of Sin

Marvin L. Weir

In this world, there will always be a battle raging between light and darkness, Heaven and Hell, Christ and Satan. The deceitfulness of sin will never shine brighter than in the incident involving King Herod and John the Baptizer. May we learn (Mark 6:14-28) some of the many dangers of sin.

Sin will deceive one into ignoring God's warning. King Herod married a woman named Herodias that he had not God-given right to marry as she was his brother's wife. (v. 17). Herod and Herodias were living in adultery (yes, one can live in this sinful state (see Col. 3:5-7), and John warned Herod of his ungodly marital status in saying, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (v. 18). God's search light of truth (His word) always clearly reveals the darkness of sin. This was Herod's opportunity to heed God's warning and turn from his sin. Herod chose, however, to ignore God's warning and allow his sin to influence him to engage in further acts of ungodliness.

So very many people today refuse to heed God's warning regarding adulterous marriages. Brethren at Corinth were warned, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators...nor adulterers...shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:9-10). The Galatian brethren were told that one who practices a "work of the flesh," such as "fornication," will "not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21). God's rule for marriage is set forth in language that cannot be misunderstood: "For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man" (Rom. 7:3-4). Christ gave the one and only ex-

ception to this rule in saying, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. 19:9). Thus, if fornication or adultery is not the cause of the innocent person putting away (divorcing) his mate, such person is not permitted by God to scripturally remarry. Our warning to those in unscriptural marriages today is the same warning Herod rejected: "It is not lawful.."

Sin will cause one to refuse to give up sin even though he is perplexed upon hearing the truth (v. 20). Isn't it amazing that one can "gladly" hear God's message regarding a particular matter and still steadfastly refuse to turn from unrighteousness? This reveals the tremendous power that sin has over a person, and the stubbornness and pride of the human heart. Isaiah reminds people of the one thing that must always occur before the guilt of sin can be forgiven. This principle has not and will never change: "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7).

Sin will allow us to be blinded by the opinions of other people. Herod obviously enjoyed his relationship with Herodias, and placed John in prison to please her (v. 17) Herod knew that John "was a righteous and holy man" (v. 20), and yet he allowed lust to reign over the voice of conscience and God. In acquiescing to the wishes of Herodias, Herod refuses to comply with what he knows to be godly and right. Many people will lose their souls while listening to the opinions of others rather than minding the voice of God (He speaks to us through

—Continued on P. 16

Eighth Annual *Banner of Truth* Lectures

Murray, KY, June 23-26, 2008

Theme: *Serving the True God in an Evil World*

Venue: Curris Center, Murray State University Campus, 3rd Floor Theater

Monday, June 23

10:00 A.M.	<i>Serving the True God</i>	Alan Adams
11:00 A.M.	<i>The Christian and the Powers That Be</i>	Michael Willy
1:30 P.M.	<i>The Music God Approves in Worship</i>	Paul Curless
2:30 P.M.	<i>Beware of the Spirit of Compromise</i>	Ken Friel
3:30 P.M.	<i>The Influence of Evil Politicians</i>	Michael Willy
7:00 P.M.	<i>The Evil Influence of Our Schools</i>	Paul Curless
8:00 P.M.	<i>More Than Conquers through Christ</i>	Rusty Stark

Tuesday, June 24

10:00 A.M.	<i>Need for Recruiting Soldiers for Christ</i>	Lloyd Gale
11:00 A.M.	<i>Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear</i>	Rick Knoll
1:30 P.M.	<i>Only the Gospel of Christ Saves</i>	Damond Lundy
2:30 P.M.	<i>Seeking First the Kingdom of God</i>	Steve Baisden
3:30 P.M.	<i>God-Approved Unity in Christ</i>	Ken Friel
7:00 P.M.	<i>Overcoming Evil with Good</i>	Tom Snyder
8:00 P.M.	<i>Serving God in All the World</i>	Glen Tattersall

Wednesday, June 25

10:00 A.M.	<i>.God-Given Power to Choose</i>	Damond Lundy
11:00 A.M.	<i>Evil Faced by First Century Christians</i>	Rusty Stark
1:30 P.M.	<i>Overcoming the Present World</i>	Glenn Tattersall
2:30 P.M.	<i>Facing Evil within the Church</i>	Lloyd Gale
3:30 P.M.	<i>Victory for the Overcomers</i>	Rick Knoll
7:00 P.M.	<i>Acts of Acceptable Worship</i>	Virgil Hale
8:00 P.M.	<i>The Evils of Islam</i> Walter Pigg	

Thursday, June 26

10:00 A.M.	<i>Evils Faced by Old Testament Characters</i>	Tom Snyder
11:00 A.M.	<i>Power of the Printed Page</i>	Jimmy Bates
1:30 P.M.	<i>Devices and Wiles of the Devil</i>	Garland Robinson
2:30 P.M.	<i>The Home and the Church Working Together</i>	Virgil Hale
3:30 P.M.	<i>The Evil Influence of the ACLU</i>	Jeff Bates
7:00 P.M.	<i>Calling Evil Good and Good Evil</i>	Alan Adams
8:00 P.M.	<i>Reward for Serving the True God</i>	Garland Robinson

Accommodations will be at the Best Western Motel. The price for a room with a double bed is \$47.75. This includes tax. To receive that price, those making their own reservations must specify that it is with the Hickory Grove Church of Christ account. The hotel number is (270) 753-5353. For more information call me at (270) 753-3675, or Virgil Hale: (270) 767-0625.

—Editor

Banner of Truth Reader

Tries to Justify Instrumental Music in Worship

In the February 2008 BOT, we ran an article entitled *Handling Aright The Word Of Truth*. In that article (page four), under the heading, **VI. AN EXAMPLE OF FURTHER IN UNGODLINESS**, I wrote,

Paul, citing two examples, shows us where profane babblings will “further” lead: “And their word will eat as doth a gangrene: of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus” (v. 17). What had these two men done? They were men “who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is passed already, and overthrow the faith of some” (v. 18). In our day, there are many, who like Hymeneus and Philetus, have erred from the truth. A case in point is the Max King doctrine, which says the judgment has already happened.

In the matter of worship, which is to be according to our Lord’s instruction, many have erred. Whereas Christ says, “God is a spirit: and they that worship must worship him in spirit and in truth” (Jno. 4:24), men in many cases have made worship a period of entertainment, even to the point that some are using instrumental music. There has been a movement away from what pleases God to what pleases man.

Another area where men have erred from the truth is in the realm of fellowship. God has a law on fellowship, but it is being ignored right and left as brethren are fellowshiping man-made churches, and people with all manner of false doctrines.

Randy Haddix, of Atlanta, MI., has written to express his disagreement. With a red pen, he underlined the phrase: “**FURTHER IN UNGODLINESS**,” as well as the clause: “men in many cases have made worship a period of entertainment, even to the point that some are using instrumental music. There has been a movement away from what pleases God to what pleases man.” With the

same red pen, Randy wrote: “Read Your Bible!!” Let us first give Randy’s letter entirely and verbatim —

Dear Editor

You say musical Instruments in worship is sinful. Well using The Bible, Let’s go See!

The Righteous are commanded to use them in worship! So who should we believe? You or The Word of God? Didn’t God say I Am The Same yesterday, Today and Forever? [Randy then lists the following references to Psalms, *Editor*]

Ps. 33:1-5. Ps. 81:1-5; Ps. 98:4-9; Ps. 147:7; Ps. 149:1-4. Ps. 150:1-6.

They were used by Prophets I Sam. 10:5. David used them to cause demons to leave I Sam. 16:16-23. 30:31. Job used them Job 4. Called a good thing Ps. 92:1-5. They are called Instruments of God I Chr 16:42; 2 Chr. 7:6.

Are used in the Reign of Christ Ps. 87:7 24 Elders and 4 angels play them in heaven Rev. 5:8

Tribulation Saints play them in heaven Rev 15:2

Is it not Reasonable to Then Approve musical instruments with Scriptural backing??? RLH

We now respond —

Dear Randy,

From time to time we encourage the readers of Banner of Truth to respond to the material carried. I truly appreciate your response, even though I do not accept the conclusion you have reached with regard to the use of instrumental music in worship to God, and I’ll point out reasons why in our discussion.

Randy, your response presents a real opportunity to study the subject. Our discussion will be read not only by you, but by several thousand others. This will include others who also hold ↴

your position on the subject. The study on this subject, as well as others, is indeed timely. And the way to arrive at an answer acceptable to God, is only through a study of God's word.

My objective in this discussion is to set forth as clearly as I can, what God's word teaches. I trust that you, too, want to understand the teaching of God's word on the subject.

With regard to your effort to justify the use of instrumental music in worship, I believe your effort is the most often used by those by those who take your position. In my more than fifty years of preaching, teaching, and the study of the Bible it certainly appears to be so.

Randy, in the following discussion I will note some of the main points you have made. I will be using **bold type** when citing your words. Your further response is both welcomed and encouraged.

You say:

"...musical Instruments in worship is [sic] sinful." This is the conclusion that you say I have made. You are right in that I believe they are sinful. I will endeavor to show from God's word why I so believe.

"Well using The Bible, let's go see!" I commend you for suggesting that we use the Bible. That is the source by which we can determine if something is right or wrong in God's sight. My basis for believing the use of instrumental music in worship is sinful is none other than what the Bible teaches. We know that Paul said, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). If, then, we believe something because that is what God's word clearly says, we have a right to do so. If, on the other hand, if we believe something based on a misunderstanding what God's word teaches, that belief or faith is wrong.

"The Righteous are commanded to use them in worship!" Now, to whom does the word "righteous" apply?

Are you using this to apply to people under the Law of Moses, or people under the New Testament? To refer to people as "righteous" who are now keeping the Law of Moses is wrong. Paul says that those who are justified by "the law" are "fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

"So who [sic] should we believe? You or the Word of God?" By all means you should believe what the Word of God says. I could ask you the same question. The correct answer is that we should believe what God's word says. Religious instruction comes from two different sources; either from God or from man. Some times both sources are used. We have a God-given right and responsibility to believe only the former; never man's religious instruction.

"Didn't God say, I am the Same yesterday, Today and Forever?" I believe that statement is found in Hebrews 13:8 in reference to Christ, and I grant that the same is certainly true of the God-head. However, though God is indeed unchangeable, this does not mean God's laws have always been the same. We know that God had different laws at different times. There have been three laws approved by God: the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Law of Christ, the gospel, the New Testament. Neither the Father, the Son, nor the Spirit has, in the New Testament, authorized the use of instrumental music in the worship of God in the Christian Age.

"They were used by Prophets I Sam. 10:5...David used them..." You make several references to Psalms and some to prophets. But what do these references teach about the use of instrumental music in worship? They show that under the Law of Moses, musical instruments were used, and had God's approval. We see no need to argue that God never sanctioned the use of musical instruments under the Law of Moses. That, however, is not the question to be raised; rather: *When* did God approve the use of the instrument? →

If we were living under the law of Moses [none but the Jews did that], we would have a right to use instruments in worship. We would have a right to do a great many things which they did under the Law of Moses. But as we mentioned earlier, Paul said that if one sought to be justified under “the law” that one would fall from God’s grace (Gal. 5:4).

Another very important matter to consider is that if we are going to justify one thing by the Law of Moses, we would be duty bound to keep all the law. We could not just pick and choose what parts of the Law of Moses we would keep. If the Law of Moses authorizes the use of the instrument, it also justifies many, many other parts of the law. For example, what about offering animal sacrifices? What about burning incense? What about keeping the Sabbath? What about observing the various feast days which were a part of Moses’ law, to mention just a few. One of the greatest causes for misunderstanding God’s teaching about the use of instrumental music in worship to Him, is that many people fail to understand that the Law of Moses is no longer in effect. Also, the Law of Moses was for the Jews, not for the Gentiles.

We are going to give a few of the many passages in God’s word that show clearly that the Law of Moses is no longer in effect for Jew or Gentile. Carefully consider the following passages:

“In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old” (Heb. 8:13).

“And for this cause he is the mediator of the New testament...” (Heb. 9:15).

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Heb. 8:8).

“For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12).

“He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified...” (Heb. 10:9-10).

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col. 2:14).

Many other references could be given which show that the Law of Moses is no longer in effect. But what need is there to add other passages, in view of the fact that there is no room to doubt or misunderstand the ones we have given. **“...Saints play Them in heaven Rev 15:2.”** This reasoning is some times used to justify the use of the instrument, but when seriously considered it carries no weight of justification whatever. Revelation fifteen, verse two says, “And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.” Why pick out one of these highly figurative things and make it literal while ignoring the others? We see all manner of things listed as being in heaven but are not said to be in the church: incense, candelabras, altars, and so on.

“Is it not Reasonable to then Approve musical Instruments with Scripture backing???” For a thing to be scriptural it has to be authorized by what God’s word says. As we noted earlier, faith comes by the hearing of God’s word (Rom. 10:17). But no place in the New Testament, the law under which we must serve to be accepted, do we find the use of the instrument authorized. We cannot act on the basis of what may seem “reasonable” to man to justify our belief and practice. The apostle Paul was a persecutor of the church before he learned the truth and obeyed it to become a christian. Yet, what Paul was doing was what he thought was right. Note what he said: “I verily thought with myself [reasoned] that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26:9). He goes on to tell what he had done to God’s people, such as shut- 1

ting them up in prison and other forms of persecution, even giving his voice against them when they were put to death. The same thing is true today, in that we cannot go by what we “think” rather than what God’s word says.

Randy, I have responded to just about everything you said. And I’m looking forward to hearing from you and having your response to what I’ve pointed out. If I’m in error, I certainly want to know it. I trust that you feel the same. On that basis we can make this study profitable to both of us and some of the thousands who will read it.

I know that what others have done does not tell us what we are to do in some many cases, and especially in religious matters. But it is some times helpful to us to consider what others say when they say what they believe the Bible teaches. In this sense we are considering the belief of a number of well known religious leaders of the past and what they said regarding the use of musical instruments in New Testament worship.

John Calvin: “Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of other shadows of the law.”

John Wesley said, “I have no opposition to the organ in our chapel provided it is neither seen nor heard.”

Adam Clarke: “I am an old man and a minister; and I declare that I never knew them [mechanical instruments] productive of any good in the worship of God; and I have reason to believe that they were productive of much evil.”

Charles Spurgeon: “I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery.”

Randy, there is no question at all that singing is the kind of music God wants in Christian worship. We learn this from Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16-17. We know that we cannot go wrong by doing that which God approves.

We shall look forward to your response in this discussion. I am open to learning what God’s word teaches and I trust that you feel the same. Therefore, as Isaiah said, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord...” (Isa. 1:18).

—Editor

The Inelegance of Yapper Kicking

The Germans have a word for pleasure in the pain of others, *schadenfruede*. Our beloved BOT editor has over the years accused his son-in-law of the same. It is not that the son-in-law has a perverse sense of humor, rather our editor can just make pain and frustration funny. A rare talent indeed.

Years ago, circumstances necessitated the editor’s driving a car out to Searcy, AR and riding a bus back to Murray, KY. It was during the winter and the roads were icy. Coming into Murray on 641, he asked the driver to let him off, and he set out to walk a couple of miles home. Along the way, he was accosted by a ferocious yapper; a feist, or chihuahua, if memory serves. The yapper was outraged, persistent, and ultimately annoying to the point that our editor decided to punt. He missed the yapper, slipped on the ice and wound up with a panoramic view of the sky. Aside from the humor, there are lessons in this.

We can, of course, all relate. Few things are more wearisome than an outraged, fixated yapper. Put one on a podium, behind a mike, or at a keyboard and the yapping is even more intolerable, even deafening if a yapper pack forms. Joining the fray with a yapper, much less a pack of them, is a no-win proposition.

If you let your anger and frustration get the best of you and you lash out at every yapper that comes along, more than likely you will wind up on your back. “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression” (Pr 19:11). A man who “ruleth his spirit” is mightier than one who “taketh a city” (16:32).

What to do? Do not turn your back on a yapper; he will nail you in the back of the leg. Eyeball him; give a “soft answer” (15:1); and, back slowly away from him.

A yapper is little with a big complex. As the old saying goes, though: The shadow of a little person is biggest when the sun is going down. A yapper in the setting sun casts the shadow of the Hound of the Baskervilles. Just keep your eye on him, and wait till the sun goes down.

Beloved, yapper kicking is inelegant at best. —AA

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Return Services Requested

Sunday Services:

Bible Classes 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

Continued from P. 7,

His Word).

Sin will cause one to abandon what is reasonable and right. The “daughter of Herodias danced, and pleased Herod...” (v. 22). As James Smith says, “Sin first interests, then excites, then captivates.” When one allows the god of pleasure to dance before his eyes and inflame his passions, he will act rashly as did Herod in promising to Herodias’ daughter whatever she might request (v. 22).

Sin will cause one to be sorry while refusing to abandon sin. The daughter of Herodias did not ask for money or land but for the head of John the Baptizer (v. 25). Herod was “exceeding sorry” (v. 26), but because of pride would not refuse her request. Herod allowed sin to turn him into its slave. The pleasure of a sinful relationship has now paved the way to yield to other sinful demands.

Sin will produce unpleasant and haunting memories. The miracles and work of Christ caused Herod to remember and say, “John, whom I beheaded, he is risen” (v. 16).

[EDITOR’S NOTE: Somehow in the shuffle, the close and summary portion of brother Weir’s fine article was lost. Fortunately, the gist of the article is not materially affected; nonetheless, we apologize both to brother Weir and the readers.]

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