



INSTITUTE of CHRISTIAN GROWTH

A Ministry of Carolina Evangelical Divinity School

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In This Issue:

More on TRUTH

Book Reviews

Heaven Is for Real

The Popular Bible Prophecy Commentary

COMMENTARY

Every time I think I have this letter finished, I read something new that I feel compelled to include.

This time it was an article in the most recent AFA Journal. In it, an anthropologist named J.D. Unwin, writing in 1934, along with a sociologist named Pitirin Sorokin writing in 1956, are said to attribute the dissoluteness and decay of societies to the relaxation of sexual mores. It is likely they were influenced by the writings of S. Freud (Sigmoid Fraud), who tried to attribute everything man thinks and does to sex. He profoundly influenced cultural anthropology and sociology in the days these men wrote. In contrast, I am convinced the repudiation of all of our traditional mores has played a significant role in our current decay. Sex is not the only thing that has had an effect these days.

practiced. This month I am going to identify the most common sins and their consequences.

I know that you may not be enthusiastic about this subject, for it arouses guilt feelings in all who hear about it. I am always amazed at the lack of response that ensues when I bring up the subject among a bunch of theologians. They too feel guilty.

To illustrate this desire to avoid the subject: I called a group of theologians to be watchmen, and for a change they did get into the problem. We were having a great prayer time until one participant began to deliver a prayer sermonette about the



I will put my law in their minds & write it on their hearts.

Jeremiah 31:33

★ *Heaven Is for Real*
★ *The Popular Bible Prophecy Commentary*

In my last newsletter, I wrote about homosexual sin having consequences. It, however, is a minimal problem in our society; other sins are more pervasively

thousands of Christians in our society who are doing great things. That person, in the past, has shown a propensity to “change the subject” when sin, shame, or the need for repentance is mentioned.

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In my 44 years in the church, there is one thing that stands out, and it is the silence about sin. I have to admit that one of my friends is preaching about it these days, but he is the only one.

You know that from the very beginning of mankind's existence we have been plagued with the problem of sin. God gave Adam and Eve only one command, and that was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, with their inherent free will they chose to disobey God when Satan tempted them. Mankind has been disobeying God ever since. From time to time in various places, they get their act together and obey him for a brief interval, but they never completely obey.

God has a radical love for mankind, but it is not usually reciprocated. If you love someone you put their best interests and welfare above your own, and you communicate your love and commit acts of service to please them, but somehow this does not often enter into man's relationship with God. Their love of God is shallow, and is as one person described it, a yard wide and an inch deep.

Something about sin has been brought to my attention in the last few years – God has a radical hatred for it. From the very beginning, the wages of sin have been death; and there has been no inflation or deflation of these wages. Therefore, we can expect to suffer the consequences of our sin today, just as the Israelites suffered them in the Exodus and thereafter. All the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi remonstrate against it.

My reason for choosing this subject is that I am greatly disturbed by the realization that we are a profoundly dissolute (sinful) nation. For instance, there have been almost daily murders in Durham during the last week. A woman was shot just sitting in her car at a convenience store. There is usually one rape a week in the area. One of my medical journals noted that 25% of women in service are sexually assaulted. Bank robberies are common. Today I read about insider trading on Wall Street and how it is motivated by greed.

Even so, we are still under the covenant that our forefathers agreed to when they established this nation. We were founded under God. He has not rescinded that covenant. Therefore, our sins today will be punished; this was his promise 3400 years ago, and it is his promise today. God is the same yesterday, today and forever; and so are his commandments.

Having said we are dissolute, what is the evidence to support such an assertion? If we start with the necessity to obey the Ten Commandments, we can say first that we have not loved God with all our being. We have rejected him and chased after gods of sex, money, sports, education, science, and ourselves. Then we have misused God's name, so that many reality programs are punctuated by bleeps. We also have not kept the Sabbath. It seems that the only business that does these days is Chic-fil-A. To the rest of them Sunday is no different from the rest of the week. Many in our society have not honored their mothers and fathers (if they know who their father is), and are not living long in the land. Adultery is rife. It is estimated that 30 to 60% of married persons commit adultery in a lifetime. One study has shown 43% of church members commit adultery and 23% of pastors do, too. Fifty percent of marriages end in divorce. As I noted earlier, we have a murderous society. Thievery is common, and lying is so common that one does not trust people in government and business to tell the truth. Greedy behavior is characteristic of the business world.

Not everyone is guilty of all of these sins, but most are guilty of at least one of them. As noted above, sin is always a problem in the church, addressed by God first with the Ten Commandments, then afterward through the Levitical laws. Two theologians later addressed sin on two different occasions, with lists of the most common and deadly sins. The first list was that of Evagrius of Pontus who listed eight, but this was modified and reduced to seven by Gregory the Great in the sixth century. It has been a standard list since then. They are pride, envy, gluttony, lust, anger, greed, and sloth. The first six require no explanation, but sloth does. It is the avoidance of physical or spiritual work.

There is no hierarchy of sin, but Bill Backus in his PhD thesis on the seven deadly sins noted that pride is the mother of all the rest. Pride is defined as an excessive belief in one's own abilities that interferes with the individual's recognition of the grace of God. Pride is also known as vanity. These sins are listed in the Bible. God says that he hates pride (Proverbs 8:13). Envy has severe consequences (Proverbs 14:30). Proverbs 23:2 condemns gluttony, and anger is condemned in Genesis 49:7. Greed (covetousness) is condemned in Isaiah 57:17, and sloth (laziness) in Proverbs 12:24.

Now let us next inquire into the importance of the seven deadly sins. Pride is particularly egregious in the eyes



of God so let us ask why God hates pride so. The answer is that pride will lead a person to make himself god or worship other gods. Satan knows that to be as God is particularly appealing to man. He has, therefore, continued to tempt man into this apostasy. His primary method of promoting his philosophy is to have it taught in our colleges and universities as the philosophy of humanism. Humanism is a religion.

The first humanist manifesto actually was called, The Religious Humanist Manifesto I. The American Humanist Association now defines it as “a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism and other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.”

There is only one problem with their philosophy – its practitioners cannot aspire to the greater good of humanity. They only aspire to satisfy personal desires, because humans lack the power to control those desires. Look at the lives of most who have promoted humanistic philosophy, and then look at most activities of faculties and students on many college campuses today; they are paragons of iniquity.

Envy is the second deadly sin listed. Envy is painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another, joined with a desire to possess the same advantage. Keeping up with the “Joneses” is a common problem in our society today. We all want nice homes, cars, boats, RV’s, cruises, etc, and often go into debt to obtain them. We do not aspire to having our needs met, we aspire to having our needs and our wants met. Our greed puts us in debt so that the average American owes 8,000 dollars in personal debt on which he pays 7-19% interest.

Gluttony is so common that we do not even think of it as a sin. The fact that 35% of our population is obese, and that 6% are extremely obese, is mute evidence of the incidence of gluttony. Today I was at water aerobics trying to strengthen my legs weakened by diabetic neuropathy. In the pool were five people who were morbidly obese. They are so obese that they cannot exercise by conventional means so they have to have the flotation of the water. Television is full of advertisements offering to help people lose weight, and 55 billion dollars was spent on dieting in 2010. Negative gluttony is revealed in the statistic

that 1% of girls are anorexic, and 2% have bulimia. Food advertisements fill the newspapers, and the food channel and other TV shows tempt us with all kinds of delicacies.

Lust is stimulated with skimpily dressed women in real life and in the media. Over 4,000,000 websites have explicit sex to view, and sex education in the schools encourages sexual activity even in elementary grades. Media promotion of sexual indulgence gives rise to fornication and adultery.

People carry loads of anger because they are not forgiving, and in fact cannot forgive. This load of anger results in child, spousal, and elderly abuse; assaults and even in murder.

Sloth is rampant. The greatest problem is spiritual sloth. With this sin, even people who are Christians do not pray, do not study the Bible, and do not worship in spirit and truth. Christianity is a relational religion, so it requires the use of the means of grace to maintain our relationship with God.

At this point, we must deviate from our discussion and remember God said, “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:5-6, NIV).

Why did He say this? The answer lies in his radical hatred of sin, which is what idol worship leads to. He especially hated the worship of Molech, who demanded the sacrifice of first-born sons and other children. He also hated the worship of Ashtoreth since she was a fertility goddess who was worshiped by having anal sex with priests and priestesses of the cult. She was associated with the worship of Molech or Baal. The Israelites paid dearly for their idolatry by near destruction, and so shall we, because we are sacrificing our children to the god of self. One million and three hundred and one thousand abortions a year testifies to this form of sin.

From the foregoing, it should be clear that we are worshiping false gods; and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob does not tolerate his rejection for false gods. When he said, “I will destroy your high places, cut down



your incense altars, and pile your dead bodies on the lifeless forms of your idols, and I will abhor you,” (Leviticus 26:29-31, NIV), he was promising drastic punishment for idolatry. Moses’ song before his death predicted the consequences of worshiping non-gods. Although idolatry is not one of the seven deadly sins, the Ten Commandments cover it, and most of the prophets condemn it.

Finally, I am writing about sin because verses in Ezekiel 3:16-18 prompted this letter, reading, “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to a wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood.”

I truly believe that I am personally called to be a watchman, so I am “blowing the trumpet.” As I have reflected on how God will punish us for our sinfulness, I came to the conclusion that since there are no nations who can get at us militarily, he will punish us economically. He did this in the Great Depression of the 20’s and 30’s; we did not listen. I am old enough to remember that economic debacle. The stage is set today for an economic collapse similar to or worse than the ones that occurred in our past.

I do not think I am blowing in the wind. I, and many experts, sincerely feel we are on the brink of economic catastrophe. But even if it comes, God says he will supply the needs of believers. He will be faithful if we only believe. We will have to have faith.



H *Heaven is for Real* is written by Todd Burpo and Lynn Vincent, and it is published by Thomas Nelson, 2010. This is the story of the experiences of a three-year ten-month-old child who was ill with peritonitis. While surgery was being done to remove his appendix and drain his peritonitis and abscesses, he said he died for two minutes. During that time, he went to heaven.

Jesus held him in his lap, and following this, he had a series of experiences confirming all I have learned and all

I have had revealed to me about Heaven. I believe it is more effective to have you read this book and find out for yourself what he experienced. Remember, there is no time in heaven; so he could have easily experienced all he described. I suggest, though, that you take note of his experiences with his sister and his great grandfather. He observed that Jesus and God are light and that they really, really love us.

When you finish reading this book, I suggest you read a book I reviewed some time ago entitled *23 Minutes in Hell*.

My granddaughter gave me a copy of a book she apparently had used at Liberty University where she is a student. It was published in 2006. I had not seen it so she gave me a copy. Written by Tim LaHaye and Ed Hinson, the title is *The Popular Bible Prophecy Commentary*. It is typical Tim LaHaye pretrib writing. It goes through the Bible book-by-book, and cites the various scriptures that are deemed prophetic. It is well done and well referenced.

There were contributors to the book beside the authors, but there is no indication as to what contributions they made. I cannot determine whether LaHaye and Hinson were editors or sole authors. No matter, the book is useful in documenting their pretrib theology. It is better used as a reference book, although I have read it through. Some parts are a little confusing, but for the most part, it is very readable. It is not as good as *Left Behind*. (Incidentally, we were or were not been left behind Saturday May 21, in spite of Camping’s prediction. Oh well, another “prophetic” utterance down the drain.)



A recent picture of Dr. Wilson relaxing in his den.



Personal Notes

I am sure you have discerned that my wife and I are not doing well. This is true! Old age has caught up with us, and both of us have chronic pain problems. It has never been my desire to seek comfort from the people who read this letter, so let me say that God is comforting us, and that we continue to serve him even though we are handicapped.

We went to Charleston, SC, over Easter and spent three days on the Isle of Palms with our daughter, son in law, and three grandchildren from Sudbury, MA. In addition, we spent two days visiting a friend in Mt. Pleasant. Both towns are just across the river from Charleston. We had a great time sampling the delicious seafood available in Mt. Pleasant and Charleston.

On Mother's Day, I preached at Westwood Baptist Church in Roxboro, NC. My second son and his family are members there.

I now have a Sunday School class to teach in our local Methodist church. It is the "old folks" class, but I am having a ball teaching them. I take the scripture given in our quarterly booklet and run with it. The Methodist literature is not bad now, but I like to present what the Holy Spirit leads to me to say about the scripture for that week.



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One of the women in our church and I are going to do a discipleship training course starting in mid June; it will last eight weeks. This is something for both the new and old members in our church.