

LEADING OTHERS INTO SIN

By Mark Lindley

The Bible teaches that Judgment Day is coming. On this future and final day, we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of the things we have done in our bodies. (2 Corinthians 5:10.) The Scriptures reveal that we will be judged individually and personally: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14:12.) We will not be judged as a church, a family, or any group. Rather, we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ . . . alone.

However, this does not mean that we are exempt from being judged for how we have impacted the lives of others. Every person has influence. We can influence our friends and families in a positive way by setting a Christ-like example for them to follow. We can also exert a negative influence on our friends and families by leading them into sin. If we, by a poor example, influence others to

sin, we will be held accountable. Yes, we will be judged according to our own personal deeds, but also by the way we have influenced others.

Jesus warned, "It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and be cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." (Luke 17:1,2.) Imagine how terrible it would be to have a huge stone tied around your neck and then for you to be thrown into the depths of the sea. As tragic as that would be, it would still be better than facing the consequences of causing someone else to sin.

The apostle Paul wrote, "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." (Romans 14:13.) You would not want

to place an obstruction in the path of a friend or family member because the obstruction could cause him to fall and be seriously injured; perhaps breaking a bone or sustaining other painful injuries. By this same line of reasoning, we should never place a spiritual obstruction that would cause others to fall into sin. If we do, we will be held responsible on Judgment Day.

In view of these thoughts, each one should ask: Am I living in such a way that others could safely imitate my example? Do I tempt others by dangling temptation before them? Do my words, clothing, actions, habits, priorities, and overall daily conduct serve as a stepping-stone to higher ground, or a stumbling block, causing others to slip and fall? These are things to consider in view of the coming judgment.

— Ripley, MS

THE BOND OF PEACE

by Wayne Robbins

The early church had strong spiritual relationships. Here are some spiritual rules that will help us have the same spiritual closeness.

1. Give the benefit of a doubt. What is said or done may not be intended the way we first perceive them.
2. Be patient. Many are weaker and not as talented as we may be. Therefore they need our patience as they struggle to develop. An inspection of our own hearts may help us be patient. We may find that we are not as perfect as we first thought – very humbling.
3. Be a servant to all. Have the best interest of all at heart. Serve them to bring out their

- best. This takes humility.
4. Do not judge others harshly. We judge out of pride. Besides, there is no way that we can know all that others have to deal with. Nor can we know all they are doing for the Lord. Judging is a sin. Remember we all commit sin – we need to put down our casting stones.
5. Watch our tongue. We sometimes use our tongues in anger to punish others. But God is the avenger – not us. The tongue is a lighted match. Use it for good, not to burn down the forest.
6. Be kind. Our people experience enough harshness in the world. They certainly don't need to receive it from us. They need

to experience from us the consoling touch of a sweet spirit.

7. Be forgiving. We all sin. We all need forgiveness from God. God forgives us and we must forgive others. Only hateful bitter hearts hold grudges and will not forgive.
8. Be encouraging. Our people need a good word from us. They need to be uplifted – not put down. Our encounters with them should leave them feeling better about themselves – not more depressed. These rules can be summed up in the words of Jesus, "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise." (Luke 6:31.)

Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

By Joe Slater

We scarcely have time to digest the news of one shooting, at a school or elsewhere, until there is another, or so it seems. Naturally, people wonder why this is happening, and what can we do about it. Unfortunately, the advice from the secular progressives in positions of influence is little better than, "Take two aspirin and call me in the morning." They treat the symptoms instead of the cause.

Over 2700 years ago, a prophet in the Northern Kingdom (Israel) lamented, "They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind." (Hosea 8:7.) Israel had forsaken the true God and true religion in exchange for idolatry with all of its corruption. They had, indeed, sown the wind. Now they would reap the whirlwind. God would allow their enemy, Assyria, to conquer them and take away the survivors as captives. While the symptom was a menacing foreign army, the real problem was sin.

I submit to you that the ongoing plague of school shootings is but one of many ways in which we are reaping the whirlwind. Mass media, public education, civil government, and other highly influential institutions (including much of religion) are dominated by people whose philosophy is strongly secular and anti-God. Christians who work in these areas fight valiantly in an uphill battle.

The secularists have enshrined situation ethics as an unquestionable dogma; anyone daring to challenge it is caricatured as a dangerous nut-job. Situation ethics means that there are no absolute standards of right and wrong; the only thing that is absolute is that there are no absolutes! Indeed, they have sown the wind!

Since there are (supposedly) no absolutes, how can anyone logically say it is wrong to shoot somebody else? After all, we've legally killed over fifty million people who were inconvenient or unwanted over the last 40+ years. Few care to discuss whether abortion is right or wrong; the politically correct question is, "How do you feel about it?"

To the children, the unspoken message is: "The only reason you're here is because we wanted you. We killed fifty million of your brothers and sisters, and we could have killed you just as easily, and there would have been nothing wrong with it." Given that bankrupt philosophy, why are we surprised when some children have no respect for each other's lives or for adults' lives?

"He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow." (Proverbs 22:8.) Gruesome shootings are but one of a host of serious issues we face. We treat the symptoms in vain; the problems will be solved only by a return to God and His word.

— Justin, TX

MY CHOICE

by Dalton Key

I would be happy, or so oft I say,
If trouble could leave me somehow;
If life started suddenly going my way,
And not as it's going right now.

Oh! what a joy and a blessing I'd be;
I'd be a true servant, you know;
If only my burdens weren't bothering me,
And life hadn't brought me so low.
I have more than my share of burdens to bear,
I suffer such pain and distress;
Since life isn't fair, I have little care,
For the Lord or His kingdom, I guess.

What choice do I have? What else can I do?
I have problems enough of my own;
I can't be concerned with the church (or with you),
I think I'll just sit here and moan!

But then I remember what Paul had to say,
When he, though beset with a thorn,
Was taught to look past the pain in his way,
And offer his best for the Lord.

I can do all things, Paul wisely did write,
Through power and strength from above;
Now if Paul could continue to fight the good fight,
Then I, too, can labor and love.

Regardless my problems, in spite of my pain,
I'll give to the Savior my best;
I'll spend and be spent, come sunshine or rain;
I'll **choose** to be happy and blest!

MADE TO BE REMEMBERED

by Bobby Key

“He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered.” (Psalms 111:4.)

Why did God create such an immense and complex universe? So far as science knows now, no other planet is populated. I know that thousands of spheres sail serenely through space and we use them as fixed points for navigation. These same spheres exert influence on our reckoning of time, establishing the cycle of seasons. But I wonder if an all-powerful God could have done this by simpler devices.

Our mind falters in seeking to estimate the great enormity of space. The heat of the sun warms us; the size of the sun stuns us. Its diameter is 109 times that of the earth and it is only one of millions (billions?) of similar stars. Astronomers affirm that many of the stars would outshine the sun if they were as close to earth as it is (the sun is a mere 93 million miles from earth).

Why is God’s creation so vast? Reason and science surmise the answer, but the answer is clearly revealed in our text: “He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered.”

We often are made to suffer because of a failure to remember. Parents sometimes fail to remember their responsibilities toward their children. Spouses too-often fail to remember their obligations to one another. But forgetting the God of heaven is especially dangerous.

May we gaze into the heavens and ever be constrained to remember the God who created them - and us.

— Miami, OK.

Editorial . . .

ON THE PASSING OF YEARS

by Dalton Key

It seems as but yesterday that I was a young boy wishing to be older, yet not really knowing what “older” meant. The dream came true, and all too soon.

I was much younger when I heard brother George Stephenson describe in a sermon what he called, “The Six B’s of Old Age.” His list seemed remote and unlikely to the ears of a robust twenty-year-old, but the “B’s” are now beginning to catch up with me. For those interested, the “B’s” in question are baldness, bifocals, bridges, backache, bulges and bunions. All I can say is this: I - as yet - have no bunions.

Solomon uncovered a similar collection of age-based ailments in the final chapter of Ecclesiastes, mentioning maladies ranging from poor eyesight and diminished hearing to insomnia and loss of teeth.

Time moves in but one direction. And whether we like it or not, whether we agree to it or not, we’re all getting older. Cosmetic surgery may disguise it; creams and gels may mask it; vitamins, medicines and medical interventions may temporarily delay it; but nothing short of the Lord’s return will stop our inexorable march to the grave.

David’s prayer could just as easily be ours: “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee.” (Psalms 39:4,5.) Another of the Psalms sets forth “the days of our years” as “threescore years and ten,” adding, “and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away . . . So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” (Psalms 90:10,12.)

Scripture thus encourages putting matters of time and life, of aging and death, in perspective. Since we’re not getting younger, and because we’re all moving inevitably toward death, we should make the very best use of the time we have. We should “apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

If not now, when?

There is, of course, a wonderful place described in Scripture as devoid of sorrow and tears and pain and death (Revelation 21:4); a land, as we sing, “where we never grow old.” But that place, that land, is not here. It awaits us in heaven, where lies “our citizenship.” (Philippians 3:20, ASV.)

May we so live here as to be prepared for that beautiful home “over there.”



GROWING UP

By Milton Smith

Generally, when we think of “growing up,” our minds turn to those years that one begins to leave behind childhood and starts the process of entering into adulthood. Physically, this is what “growing up” is all about. But there is another area of growth that is much more critical because it prepares us for eternity: growing up spiritually. Simply stated, the child of God needs to grow because this is expected of him. Paul wrote of “growing up in all things” in Ephesians 4:15. There are several important areas that the child of God needs to grow in, and this should be the ongoing goal of each and every Christian.

To begin with, we should desire to grow in our *faith*. The Hebrew writer tells us in Hebrews 11:1 that faith is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The

apostle John tells us in 1 John 5:4 that whoever is born of God overcomes the world, and he quickly adds, “and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” Faith keeps us going! It is the vessel that will carry us safely from this life to the next one.

We should also desire to grow in *knowledge*. In the last recorded words of the apostle Peter, he emphasizes to his readers that they should “grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18.) The Christian who constantly grows in knowledge is the one who is “growing up” in Jesus Christ and reaching forth to spiritual maturity.

But if we wear Jesus’ name, we should also desire to grow in *love* every day. There are few areas Paul emphasized as strongly as he emphasized love. We often refer to

1 Corinthians 13 as Paul’s great chapter on love. Here he tells us that “love never fails.” In verse 13 of this chapter Paul tells us that of faith, hope, and love, the greatest is love. Jesus once asked His followers, “If you love only those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the publicans do the same?” (Matthew 5:46.) It is obvious that Jesus was challenging His followers to achieve a degree of love that was unprecedented in the world at that time.

While it is true that there are many areas the Christian can grow in every day, it must be conceded that growth in faith, knowledge, and love are areas in which daily growth is an absolute necessity.

— Bixby, OK

FOOLS FOR CHRIST

By Cecil Burch

“We (the Apostles) are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, but we are dishonored! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless . . .” (1 Corinthians 4:10-11.)

The Apostle Paul contrasted those who were looked on as wise with the Apostles who suffered hardships while preaching the “mysteries of God” (the Gospel). How grateful we are that they were willing to be “fools for Christ”!

We don’t know how accurate the information is, but tradition reports have been given concerning some of the Apostles. They say that Peter was crucified head down, Andrew was crucified, Philip died as a martyr, Thomas died a martyr, Bartholomew was flayed to death, Mathew died a martyr, Jude died a martyr, Simon (Zelotes) was crucified, Matthias

died a martyr and Paul was killed for his faith in Rome. Their dedication in preaching the Gospel is still giving us hope just as it did them when they preached it for the first time centuries ago.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said to them, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:1-12.)

It was when the Apostle Paul was nearing the end of his life that he said, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally,

there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:6-8.)

What a privilege to be a Christian and be “Fools for Christ!”

— Angel Fire, NM

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Dalton Key.....Editor

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