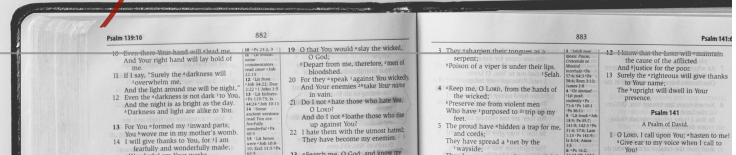


WORDS *of* TRUTH

"Words from the Past"



Theme Articles

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Hear Them Speak

With today's technology, we have access to the voices of powerful preachers from the past. The process of transferring old recordings to new formats can be long and painstaking, but it is worth every effort. If your congregation has old recordings, let me encourage you to try to preserve them digitally. The brotherhood will benefit from those messages for generations to come.

Here at *Words of Truth* we have articles going back nearly 60 years by some of the most acclaimed preachers during that span. This issue is a selection of some of those articles. Herein you will find articles from the 1950s, 60s, 80s, 90s, and from the 2000s. The purpose of this issue is to show **truth has no expiration date!** The Gospel has been relevant in every age since it was accomplished, and it will continue to impact every decade until the end of time.

Let us continue to use the methods of communication available to us to transmit the message of God's hope, love, mercy, and forgiveness to men all over the world.

Be Useable!

Chad Dollahite

One of the most degrading and insulting things one person can say to another is, “You’re useless!” No one wants to be *called* useless, and even more so, no one wants to *be* useless. What is quite sad is that some people *consider* themselves useless. Let us never forget, brethren, that no Christian is without value! As Christians, we are the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:21), and to say that any of us is useless is wrong. It is true that some of God’s children may shirk their duties and/or live unfaithfully, but no child of God is totally useless. Even the unfaithful Christian may repent, get his life right, and become active and useful once again in the Lord’s service.

In Acts 18:24-28, we meet for the first time a man named Apollos. Apollos was certainly not useless in his service of God. In fact, he made himself quite useable, and he is a great example for Christians today. Notice from Acts 18:24-28 the following characteristics of Apollos that made him usable.

Apollos was talented (v. 24). The Scripture says Apollos was “an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures.” Here is a man who had talent. He not only had a talent for speaking/preaching, but he also knew God’s Word quite well. Talent certainly helps make a Christian usable, but it is not the “be-all and end-all.” Probably all of us have known someone, perhaps even a gospel preacher, who was quite talented, but who failed to put God first, thus becoming unfaithful to his Lord. And, talent can also be developed. Some naturally are better at public speaking, some are better at singing, and so on. But, talent in these areas (and others) can be developed by practice and training. Being talented certainly helps one become usable in God’s service.

Apollos was trained (vv. 24-25). We have already noted that Apollos was “mighty in the scriptures” (v. 24). Verse 25 describes him as a man who was “instructed in the way of the Lord.” One would be hard-pressed to say Apollos had not had some training somewhere along the way. What about us, fellow Christians? Are we attending Bible study? Are we present at worship when the Word is being proclaimed? What about the other methods we can use to train ourselves to be usable for our Master? If we hope to be usable in the Lord’s church, we should take advantage of the many training opportunities. A scientist does not simply wake up one day and discover he is a scientist; rather, he goes to school and seminars to be trained. Likewise, a usable, knowledgeable Christian will not suddenly wake up one day and discover that she knows God’s Word; the Bible must be studied! One who takes advantage of opportunities for training will certainly be most usable in the Lord’s church.

Apollos was teachable (v. 26). Apollos knew only the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila came along and heard Apollos teaching, and they took him aside to instruct him more completely. Apollos apparently learned quite well, for we read of him further in the New Testament doing the work of the Lord faithfully (1 Cor. 3:6; Titus 3:13). What a lesson for Christians today! How often a brother or sister gets upset at being corrected, as opposed to listening humbly and learning to be more usable for God! If we ever find ourselves in the position of correcting others, we need to be sure that we do so properly and with all humility (Eph. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:25). On the other hand, if we ever find ourselves being corrected, we should listen intently, learn from it, and do as Apollos and become more usable as a consequence. Even if the corrector is not wholly right, it would do us all well to be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jam. 1:19).

Finally, Apollos was trustworthy (vv. 27-28). When Apollos was going to travel to Achaia, the brethren at Ephesus sent a “letter of recommendation” to the brethren there; and Apollos, when he arrived in Achaia, proved that the letter from Ephesus was true, as he helped the brethren out when he arrived there. Apollos proved himself usable because he proved himself trustworthy. It is always a risk to recommend someone that one does not know very well, and what a relief it is when the one recommended proves trustworthy and lives up to the recommendation! Apollos proved how trustworthy he was further as he mightily convinced the Jews (v. 28). A usable person will no doubt be a trustworthy person.

Every Christian ought to desire to be usable in the kingdom of God. When one reads about Apollos in Acts 18:24-28, it is hard to avoid noticing how this man made himself usable by being talented, trained, teachable, and trustworthy. Christian brethren, would you be usable as Apollos? It is not an accident or a “gift” that a select few “just have,” but it is something that must be desired and worked for to be obtained. May God help us all, whether we are young or old, to determine always to be usable in service to God Almighty.

[This article originally appeared in Vol. 41, No. 2, of Words of Truth (Feb. 2004). Bro. Dollahite was then living and working in Chattanooga, TN, but now preaches in Bremen, GA.]

Watch for Snakes

Allen Webster

This time of year snakes find their way out of holes and into our way. Children going out to play are reminded, “Watch for snakes!” Most adults have a horror of unexpectedly stepping on a snake. We watch with horror as the news tells of some unsuspecting resident finding a huge boa constrictor living under his house.

The US Government Peace Corps Volunteers Manual for workers in the Amazon jungle tells what to do in case of attack by an anaconda, the world’s largest snake. A relative of the boa constrictor, it grows to be 35 feet long and weighs up to 400 pounds.

The manual says: (1) If you are attacked by an anaconda, do not run. The snake is faster than you are. (2) Lie flat on the ground. Put your arms tight against your sides, you legs tight together. (3) Tuck in your chin. (4) The snake will come and begin to nudge and climb over your body. (5) Do not panic (No problem, right?!). (6) After the snake has examined you, it will begin to swallow you from the feet end — always from the feet end. Permit the snake to swallow your feet and ankles. *Do not panic.* (7) The snake will now begin to suck your legs into its body. You must lie perfectly still. This will take a long time. (8) When the snake has reached your knees, slowly and with as little movement as possible, reach down, take your knife, and very gently slide it between the edge of the snake’s mouth and your leg. Then suddenly rip upwards, severing the snake’s head. (9) Be sure to have your knife. (10) Be sure your knife is sharp (Author unknown).

Volunteers, anyone?!!

As bad as it would be to meet an anaconda in the Amazon, it is worse to tangle with a snake we have “round these parts.” No, not a cottonmouth or rattler, but a serpent called *Satan*. This was the only evil beast in God’s Garden (Gen. 3:1; cf. Luke 10:18; Rev. 20:2). His poison is worse than the rattler and his grip is tighter than the constrictor. His poison is deceit (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:3, 14, 15; Rev. 20:7-8). His grip is sin’s addictiveness (2 Tim. 2:26).

An anaconda can outrun you, but Satan cannot. There are times to run from the Serpent. “Flee fornication” (1 Cor. 6:18). Joseph ran from Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39:12). Single people must be careful not to date those with bad reputations (Pro. 2:16-19) and the married should keep their distance from the flirtatious (1 Cor. 15:33).

“Wherefore, my dearly beloved, *flee from idolatry*” (1 Cor. 10:14). An idol is anything put first in life. Pleasure, jobs, spouses, vices or even false religions can be idols. Covetousness is idol worship (Col. 3:5), so fleeing idolatry can mean forsaking a love for money and the things it buys. “But thou, O man of God, *flee these things*; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Tim. 6:11; cf. 6:6-10).

“*Flee also youthful lusts*: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). fleeing from the serpent in youth includes avoiding dirty movies, not reading suggestive romance novels and magazines, not watching dirty soap operas and many other indecent TV shows. Dating singles must avoid places that give opportunity for lusting (such as dances, beaches, and pools). It also applies to excessive kissing and petting on dates. Satan is not as fast as an anaconda. You can outrun him. But don’t give him a head start!

An anaconda will not run from you, but Satan will. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jam. 4:7). After Jesus resisted Satan in the wilderness, “...*the devil leaveth him*, and...angels...ministered unto him” (Mat. 4:11). Jesus put Satan’s ministers to flight in the temple (John 2:15-16). Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself (Dan. 1:8), and soon the temptation to eat the king’s meat was removed (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13; Phi. 4:13). We are to “resist steadfast in the faith” the roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:9). Though a temptation will return, if resisted most will not last very long.

An anaconda will swallow you, and so will Satan. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, *seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Pet. 5:8). The great red dragon (Satan) waited to devour the woman’s child as soon as it was born (Rev. 12:4). Though it may work with anacondas, it is not wise to let the devil swallow you half way before beginning to fight back. There is some difference between a lion’s bite and a snake’s.

An anaconda is destroyed with a knife, and so is Satan. God’s word is the Spirit’s sword (Eph. 6:17). “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and shaper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12). How was it that the devil came to flee from Jesus? Christ hit him with the two-edged sword (Mat. 4:4-10)!

We are successful against anacondas and temptations only if we are packing our weapons. All the government’s instructions are useless if the volunteers are not following the “Boy Scout’s Rule” (Be prepared). How would one with a snake up to his knees feel if he reached down for his Swiss Army knife and found that it was in his tent? How successfully will we defeat Satan without the Word in our hearts? “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11). Watch for snakes (Mark 13:37)!

[This article originally appeared in Vol. 29, No. 30, of Words of Truth (July 23, 1993). Bro. Webster now teaches for both the Georgia and Memphis Schools of Preaching.]

More Precious Than Gold

C. D. Plum

What is more precious than gold? To many people there is not anything more precious than gold. To those who believe God's word there are a number of things more precious than gold.

The salvation of a soul is more precious than gold. Jesus thought so, and said so. His challenging questions have never been successfully answered by those who disagree with his idea about the matter. "For what is a man profited," says Jesus, "if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mat. 16:26). There is no satisfying profit, either earthly or spiritual, in accumulating the wealth of the world, and losing one's soul. "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." Even if one lives to a ripe old age, sooner or later he must relinquish his hold upon his great fortune. And when the hair grows white, the step grows feeble, the breath grows short, and the eyes grow dim, what profit is there to "gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" At this moment of time, when one is about ready to say goodbye to time forever, and is about ready to take that journey into the unknown regions beyond this life, one will realize when it is too late that a saved soul is more precious than gold. At this time, when it is too late, one would gladly give all he possessed; he would exchange his gold for a crown of righteousness. Wealth does not seem so highly important when the feet begin to enter the valley of the shadows. At that time, one who has believed in God, Jesus, and the word of God, and one who has repented of his sins, confessed Jesus to be God's Son, and has been buried with his Lord in baptism, and lived as a Christian should live — these are the only things that count. Everything else is dross. Beloved reader, I wish above all things that you might believe and hear the truths expressed in the above exhortation.

But a good name is better than great riches. Says the wise man, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches" (Pro. 22:1). Dear reader, do you think this is so? If you had your choice, would you take the good name or great riches? Your riches can be taken from you, but no one can steal your good name from you. The only one that can ruin your good name is you. People may cast doubt upon you to others, and they may for a time cause a shadow to come over your life in the lives of some, but you can live down any such reflection. I repeat it: no one can ruin your name but you! If you have a good name, you have good credit. You may not have money with a good name, but with a good name you can get money.

And here is something else that is more precious than gold. "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7). We are not likely to think of our "trials" as being "much more precious than of gold," are we? But the Holy Spirit says they are more precious. Even our "fiery trials" are better for us than much gold. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Pet. 4:12). Let us as children of God think of this earth as a proving ground. Let us also think of our trials as tests of our faith. Instead of complaining, let us thank God and take courage. Let us fight on. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

How we endure our trials, how we suffer our persecutions, will in a great measure determine our destiny.

A tender conscience is better than gold. While I realize that the conscience is not a true guide, unless the conscience is trained by the truth of God's word, when we have such a conscience it is worth more to us than gold. A conscience that is educated by false teaching may be a tender conscience, but not a safe conscience. The apostle Paul, before his conversion, had a good conscience, but it led him astray. This is what he said about it: "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). Yet he persecuted Christians by consenting even unto their death. His conscience was wrongly taught. Thus, when he opposed the church of our Lord, his conscience did not rebuke him. But when he was taught better, and obeyed the Lord, his conscience received a New Testament education.

If our conscience has been New Testament trained, and accuses us when we do wrong, it is a mighty power for good. But if our conscience has been "seared with a hot iron," as the Holy Spirit declares is possible, it is then a power for evil. If our flesh is seared with a hot iron, there is very little feeling left. And if our conscience is thus seared we can steal, lie, drink, gamble, and what sin have you, and do so without a remorseful feeling. In view of this, we should be very careful to keep our conscience alive.

A tender conscience is much like bare feet in the springtime. The feet housed all winter in shoes are very tender, and in the first few barefoot days every little rough pressure hurts them. But after we go this way for a few days, the bottom of our feet become calloused so we do not feel the pain of uneven surfaces. And so it is with our conscience. When one with a tender conscience takes the first drink, or swears the first time, the pain is terrible. But let such a one go on drinking or swearing, and after a time the conscience becomes calloused or seared over, and the sin does not cause a feeling of pain. Yes, a tender conscience is worth more to one than great wealth.

And by no means do we wish to overlook this truth. Obedience is more precious than gold. Do you remember Achan who took the wedge of gold (Jos. 7:21)? God had told Israel not to partake of the spoils of the battle. Achan had a covetous heart. He disobeyed God. Israel was defeated in battle because Achan had disobeyed for gold. And do you not remember also that God said he would not help Israel as long as there was sin in the camp? Maybe there is sin in the church today. Not necessarily because someone covets gold, but sin nevertheless, whatever shade or grade. The only way we can purchase a favor with God is by obedience. Obedience is even better than sacrifice.

After all, it is not what we accumulate here that counts, but what we accumulate on the other side. The poorest Christian may be rich in the love of God, and have treasures galore in heaven. And to have our name recorded in heaven means more than to be able to write a check for the wealth of the world.

[This article originally appeared in the November 10, 1967 issue of Words of Truth.]

What is Wrong with Dancing?

M. Norvel Young

Since the origin of the dance, devout men and women have opposed it as a form of recreation. There must be some good reasons why so many devout people, even of widely differing faiths, have come to this conclusion. Jesus taught us that we should know a tree by its fruits and the fruits of social dance have brought about this opposition. Those who have observed the fruit of the dance hall have seen that the dance has not produced more love of God, more devotion to the church, more respect for those of the opposite sex, more Bible reading, more prayer or a keener interest in worship, or more unselfish service in the kingdom.

More specifically, the primary thing that is wrong with dancing is that it encourages a familiarity between the sexes, and a breaking down of the natural reserves of modesty, and it frequently leads to intimacies and petting after the dance. Dr. Leta S. Hollingsworth, Professor of Education at Columbia University, stresses this point in an article in defense of the modern dance. She writes: "Dancing is an exciting and pleasurable recreation as it affords a partial satisfaction to the sex impulse." This is not to say that all who dance are conscious of this, but it is to say that the general influence upon those who dance is such that Christians should abstain for their own good and for the sake of their influence upon others who may be more susceptible to the temptations of the dance.

In Galatians 5:9, Paul lists the works of the flesh as "fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies...revelings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Webster's New International Dictionary defines "revel" as entertainment provided for feasts, etc., as dances, pageants, masques (festive dances where all wear masks, hence, a revel). The Century Dictionary uses this sentence to illustrate its meaning: "We use always to have revels, which indeed is dancing." Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon describes it in these words: "A jovial festivity with music and dancing, a revel, carousal, merry-making." For consecrated Christians whose first aim is to please the Lord and advance his kingdom this one scripture should answer this question.

When one is deciding this matter he should always consider it from the standpoint of what a Christian is to be in relation to the world. Jesus taught us that we were not in the world to simply enjoy ourselves or amuse ourselves, but to glorify God and serve our fellowman. Any form of recreation which does not contribute to our spiritual well-being is wrong. The line of distinction between Christians and the world is sharp. Paul says for Christians not to be "fashioned according to this world," but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Rom. 12:1-2). James defines pure religion as helping the widows and orphans and keeping oneself unspotted from the world. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world," (John 18:36) and again he said, "I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14). Christians by their virtuous life should gain the respect of honorable citizens of the world, but they must never compromise

their loyalty to Christ to gain popularity with the world. We are pilgrims here on our journey to the eternal land (Heb. 11:13-16).

Devout men of various faiths have spoken out against the modern dance. A Jewish Rabbi writes, "Modern dancing is popular, not because of its grace, but because of its appeal to our lower nature." A Methodist Bishop writes: "I deem the modern dance an unmitigated evil, because in most of its forms it is vulgar and wars directly against the claims of the spiritual life." A Presbyterian preacher says: "Dancing, balls, and parties lead to forgetfulness of God." Clovis Chappel, noted Methodist evangelist, states that "60,000 girls enter the underworld every year and three-fourths of them by the dance floor." Notice that it is not music that is objected to nor the movement of the body to music such as we do in marching or playing children's games. It is the fact that the fruits of the dance floor show that it "wars directly against the claims of the spiritual life," that it leads to "forgetfulness of God."

A prominent physician in Lubbock, a leader in civic affairs, made this statement: "As far as I am concerned, the children can stay home and twiddle their thumbs rather than go to dances, and others would feel the same way, too, if they could be in my office and see mothers come in with tears streaming down their faces, with their little girls begging for help and advice."

But it is not necessary to leave the children at home and twiddle their thumbs. Christian parents and Christian young people can devise innumerable means of wholesome recreation through outings, hikes, picnics, hobbies, hunting and fishing, athletic games, good reading and good music, and a host of other activities. The Christian home should not be contented to oppose the forms of recreation which are harmful, but should provide through cooperation with other Christian homes the helpful types of recreation.

But some will ask if it is not possible to clean up the dance and place it under responsible supervision and thus make it better. Yes, it is undoubtedly possible to improve on the roadhouses, taverns, commercial dance halls, honky-tonks, etc. where dancing is accompanied by drinking (legal or illegal), gambling, profanity, and often by organized vice. But in the home or under good supervision it still retains the objectionable feature of encouraging familiarity between the sexes and the breaking down of natural reserves of modesty. And what assurance does the Christian parent have that once he has taught his children to dance in the modern manner that they will not seek the same amusement in the roadhouse? Supervisors of college and high school dances report after the students leave the supervised dance to stop at roadhouses, night clubs, etc. The Mormon Church has attempted to solve the problem by building a dance hall beside the church house, but Otis Gatewood reports that he talked with hundreds of young people and they said that soon the supervised dances were not different from the unsupervised. Where the supervision is strict the young people resort to the roadhouses.

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Did the Gentiles Have a Law?

Victor Eskew

The promoters of the “all grace — no law” theory would have us to believe that the Gentiles were a people without law. They refer to them as a “non-law keeping people” or as “nations which had no law to keep.” Their reasoning appears to be that if the Gentiles were a people without a law, their acceptance into the New Covenant would imply that it (the New Covenant) is not a word of law. Is it true that the Gentiles were without law? Or did they have a law? We hope to answer these questions in the course of this article.

The question which is most important to this discussion is: “Did the Gentiles ever commit sin?” According to the apostle Paul, they did. “What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin” (Rom. 3:9). In Romans 1, Paul lists some of the sins the Gentiles committed. They ranged from idolatry to being unmerciful. What is sin? Isn’t it the transgression of the law? Most certainly it is. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). If the Gentiles sinned, they were under the law. The Gentiles did sin. Therefore, they were under a law.

This answers the question which is the title of this article, but now others seem to come to mind. “From whence did this law come?” The answer to this is simple. It came from God. Again, we turn to the Roman epistle. In Romans 1:21 the apostle informs us of a time when the Gentiles knew God. “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” Prior to Moses’ law, mankind was under patriarchy. God revealed Himself to the heads of the families. When Moses’ law was given, it was given only to the Jews (Exo. 19:5-6; Deu. 5:2-3). It separated them from the rest of humanity. The Jews became God’s chosen people. Through them the Messiah would be brought into the world. We suppose that the rest of the world remained subject to the law of patriarchy. If not, why not? And if patriarchy did cease, please list the passages which indicate that it ceased at a certain time. This cannot be done. Therefore, we conclude that the patriarchal system given by God was the law in effect for the Gentiles.

Another question which some might have at this time is: “Of what did this law consist?” We offer the following as some of the components of the law of the Gentiles. First, there were sacrifices which had to be offered.

In Genesis 3, Abel offered a sacrifice from the flocks which was pleasing to God. In Hebrews 11:4, the writer tells us that it was offered “by faith.” Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). Thus, God commanded what was to be done (again showing that God gave this law), and Abel carried it out. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob offered sacrifices also. In Job 1:5, the man of patience offered animal sacrifices for himself and his family. Undoubtedly, Job’s sacrifice was for the purpose of atonement, as well as the sacrifices of the others who lived before the law of Moses (Heb. 9:22).

Another part of this law dealt with a priesthood. In Genesis 14:17-20 we read of Abraham’s encounter with Melchizedek. In verse 18 we are specifically told that “he was the priest of the Most High God.” Abraham respected this man’s high office, and paid tithes unto him. The priest, recognizing his superiority, and accepting Abraham, blessed him. Although we do not know the details of the priesthood, we do know one existed.

Other aspects of this law included: (1) no murder (Gen. 9:4-6); (2) the works of the law of Moses after it was instituted (Rom. 2:14-15); and (3) the words of such prophets as Obadiah and Jonah. There may have been other aspects of this law which have not been revealed unto us. But these are enough to prove that the Gentiles did have a law.

We are not saying that the Gentiles had a law equal to, nor superior to, the law of Moses. They did not. This is evident when we note that the Jews’ rejection of the law resulted in greater condemnation (Rom. 2). But the Gentiles did have a law. They became sinners (Rom. 3:23). The blood of bulls and goats had no power to take away sin under Judaism (Heb. 10:1-4). Therefore the Gentiles stood in desperate need of the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16-17), that law which can make them free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:1-2).

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(continued from page 5)

The Christian has answered the highest call in the world, the call of the Master to consecrated service. He is a saint, a disciple of the perfect Man, the Son of God. He is to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world. He is to abstain from the very appearance of evil and “not to eat flesh nor drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth” (Rom. 14:21). Even if one felt that he or she suffered no spiritual injury from dancing, the concern that he has for the welfare of others should cause him to abstain for the sake of his influence (Mat. 5:16; 13:33).

There is so much work to be done for Christ. God can do wonders with us if we will only surrender completely to Him. May God fill our lives so full with His love that we shall crowd out all fleshly desires and become more like Jesus every day. Let us find our joy in work and worship.

[This article originally appeared in Vol. 2, No. 138, issue of Words of Truth (November 10, 1967). It was borrowed from the August 12, 1954 issue of Gospel Advocate.]

Editor's Note: If these things were true in 1954, how much more so today. The movements and music in popular dancing today go so much further to provide “a partial satisfaction of the sex impulse.” This is not to mention the clothing that is typically worn when participating in modern dance at such events as proms and parties. The whole intention is to simulate sexual movements and to stimulate sexual thoughts. These things are fine when done between a properly married man and woman, but our young people need to flee both fornication and the temptations that bring about fornication. Surely, things have changed since 1954, and not for the better. As Christian parents we need to be aware of the music to which our children are listening, the videos they are watching, and the behavior they are emulating. Dancing can be a beautiful expression of the joy of the heart (2 Sam. 6:14), but the dancing being warned against in this article is not that kind of expression. Vulgar dancing is an expression of vulgar desires. Christians should stand opposed to such gyrating in 2021 as firmly as they did in 1954.]

Do You Fear the Lord?

BJ Clarke

I am not asking you if you are terrified of God. There is a tremendous misunderstanding in the minds of most people concerning what is truly involved in fearing Jehovah. The Bible speaks of two types of fear. First, there is the fear forbidden (Gen.

15:1; Exo. 14:13; Mat. 10:28; Luke 12:32). In all of these passages and hundreds more, individuals are instructed to refrain from fearing certain men or afflictions brought on by men. These are comforting assurances of God’s protective watchcare over his faithful followers.

Second, there is the fear commanded. “Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc. 12:13). This verse does not demand that we be filled with dread and fright of God. It rather speaks of fear in the sense of deep-seated reverence and respect for the authority of God as the rightful ruler of the Universe. It was this kind of godly fear that moved Noah to prepare an ark for the saving of his household (Heb. 11:7). His example is worthy!

But, how can I know if I fear the Lord? Am I supposed to build an ark like Noah? While we are not obligated to do specifically what Noah did, we are required to imitate his general attitude towards God’s wishes (Gen. 6:22). The Proverbs reveal that fear of the Lord must involve several things.

IF I WOULD TRULY FEAR THE LORD, I MUST:

(1) Seek Wisdom and Knowledge (Pro. 1:7; 2:1-5; 9:10).

The humanist doesn’t seek Divine wisdom and knowledge because he has no respect for God. He doesn’t even believe in God! He considers the wisdom of man to be supreme and sufficient to handle all of life’s problems. Contrariwise, the man who fears Jehovah realizes that he needs the wisdom from above to live a well-balanced and fulfilling life. His respect for God leads him to turn to God for wisdom just as our respect for certain individuals leads us to ask them for advice and wisdom.

(2) Hate Evil and Depart From It (Pro. 3:7; 8:13; 23:17).

If we respect God we will believe that He knows what is best for us. Thus, if God has classified certain activities as evil, we will consider them evil also. Fear of Jehovah is essential in overcoming temptations of this life. We cannot say that we fear the Lord while openly rebelling against Him and participating in evil (Jonah 1:9; 1 John 2:3-5). Doing that which God hates is not fear!

The man who fears God in the aforementioned manner will be blessed (Pro. 10:27; 14:26-27; 19:23; 22:4; 29:25). On the other hand, the man who does not fear the Lord has much to fear (Pro. 1:29-32; 10:24). “Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble” (Pro. 15:16).

[This article first appeared in the July 23, 1993 issue of Words of Truth. Bro. Clarke is now the director of the Memphis School of Preaching.]

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ASK A BIBLE QUESTION

QUESTION: Is there anything wrong with cremation?

ANSWER: As far as I can tell from a study of the Bible, the act of cremation violates no New Testament principle.

Life is the union of the body and the spirit. Death is the condition that results from the separation of the two. Once the spirit has left the body, the lifeless body begins its return to the original elements (cf. James 2:26). Solomon wrote, "The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Whether the effect is the slow disintegration of the body through the processes of decay or is achieved in seconds by fire, the result is the same, i.e., the return of the body's elements to their original state.

In the bodily resurrection discussed in 1 Corinthians 15, the "building blocks" will be reassembled, and in either instance (natural decay or cremation) the effort will be the same. Bodies which have returned to dust long centuries ago do not exist in bodily form any more than those bodies that were immediately consumed by fire. In both cases, the elements are in the universe waiting the call of God on the last great day. The One Who by the power of His word, spoke into existence the first man, will have no difficulty in bringing back together again the separated elements when the spirits emerge from the Hadean realm to join those elements on Judgment Day. The body will be raised, but then it will be changed into one fit for the spiritual realm.

We are taught in the New Testament to exhibit proper respect for the dead and to deal with them in a dignified and respectful way. Cremation, as today practiced, in no way opposes New Testament teaching.

-Andy Kizer

[As far as I can tell, this is the first "Ask A Bible Question" column that appeared in Words of Truth, although it was not called such at the time. This article first appeared in the September 2005 issue (Vol. 42, No. 9).]