The Christian Courier



Send all correspondence to 17103 Bixby Avenue, Bellflower, CA 90706

FEBRUARY 1990

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"O SEND OUT THY LIGHT AND THY TRUTH: LET THEM LEAD ME; LET THEM BRING ME UNTO THY HOLY HILL, AND TO THY TABERNACLES."

Psalm 43:3

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"THE VINEYARD OF GOD"

Isaiah 5:1-2 "...my well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" What more could he have done to this vineyard? But it still brought forth wild grapes!!

We find the church today in the same condition. When we plant a garden, do we tend for it as we do the church? Just plant it and forget about it until the harvest? If we do, we can't expect to receive a crop except maybe a "wild crop".

We bring someone into the church and then we fail to cultivate the vine which we have planted and it grows up "wild". They are planted as choice vines but they must be cared for and cultivated and have the wild growth (worldliness) pruned out so that they will become fruitful and productive in righteousness, as Christ teaches that we must in John 15:1-8. But we fail to prune out the "wild and dead" branches because we are afraid we will make them mad and they will quit the church, so we just keep trying to plant more plants and don't properly cultivate and tend for those we have.

We are told in I Thess. 5:21 to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. But the first thing we must prove is ourselves (II Cor. 13:5) whether we ourselves are in the faith, compare our lives with the examples and commands we have in the scriptures. Do we find ourselves following the world, going worldly places for entertainment? Shows, rodeos, dances, drive-ins, beach swimming, spending our time out boating on lakes having worldly fun nearly naked? Or at some public swimming pool with the crowd? In Luke 24:5 we hear the angels ask "why seek ye the living among the dead?" Those in Luke 8:14 are dead people. Why then do we as Christians find our pleasure among the dead? The scripture says in II Cor. 8:24 "Wherefore show ye to them and before the churches the proof of your love..." Not for their fun and pleasure but to them as an example as I Cor. 13:1-8 tells us that charity behaves a certain way (read and prove yourself, you may be wild grapes!). Jesus says in John 14:23 "If a man love me he will keep my words: and my Father will love him." I John 5:2 "By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep his commandments." His commandments are to love not the things of the world.

Paul tells us in Rom. 12:2 that we are to prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God by being different and not conforming to this world and once again we are told in II Cor. 6:17 "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." If we are not transformed by the renewing of our minds and do not separate ourselves from among them, we are but "<u>wild grapes</u>" and cannot expect him to receive us.

Gal. 6:4 "Let every man prove his own work and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another." One way to prove our work is by not yielding to temptations. James 1:13-14 "For everyone is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed." Temptations are around us all the time and we must hold fast and overcome them when they beset us. Temptations can come from our own brethren when they allure us to take part in some of the worldly pleasures. As Paul warns us in II Cor. 11:13-15 (verse 13) "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." And, finally, Jude 4 tells us, "For there are certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse

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8 - "Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion (or rule), and speak evil of dignities." Verse 10 - "These speak evil of the things which they know not, but what they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves." (These things that they were raised up in the worldliness in dress and lifestyle, conforming to the world.) Verse 12 - "These are spots in your feast of charity..." (Wild Grapes!!!)

In love of the truth and
the brethren,
Lloyd Treat

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"THE DOCTRINE PERTAINING TO SIN"

Any discussion that considers man in relation to God, is incomplete that does not take account of the fact of sin.

Much of the discussion in this realm misses the way because it either ignores or misinterprets sin. As preparatory to a consideration of the doctrine of salvation, we look at the doctrine pertaining to sin.

THE NATURE OF SIN!

Suppose we take for a tentative definition of sin the statement that sin is rebellion against the will of God. To make clear the nature of sin as rebellion against God, the following points need emphasis.

The element of willfulness in sin: One factor in man's personality, one thing that marks him as a being, created in the divine image is the power of the will. To be capable of obedience or disobedience, man must have the power of choice.

The obedience of physical elements or of animals to the law of their being deserves no praise because they have no choice. It is a matter of physical necessity. Animal instinct, if you will. But man obeys because he wills to obey, or disobey.

And because of this God given freedom of choice, (not choice of religion), God addresses his commandments to man.

Man is more than a mechanism. He is a living soul, made alive by God. Yet God is no respector of persons, as far as their individual accomplishments are concerned. This comes out more clearly in the fact that God has given mankind

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(as a whole) His commandments, and he also entreats, persuades and exhorts him. Man then is to be the "watchmen on the wall"; the sowers of the Gospel seed. Messengers... to persuade our fellow man to use his power of choice and follow the teaching, and be obedient to God.

One of the most impressive things about the biblical revelation of God is the infinite patience of God in dealing with the erring and sinful child of God. God was never without His witnesses and messengers. Particularly from the time of Moses on, after God had entered into covenant relations with Israel as a nation, the record is one long story of the backsliding and unfaithfulness of Israel and the faithfulness and long-suffering of God. This comes out through the whole of Old Testament history and is the theme of such Psalms as the seventy-eighth (read at your leisure).

This is impressively brought out in the life and teachings of Jesus. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem as he sees the impending doom of the city. He gives as the reason for its coming desolation that its inhabitants would not be gathered to him. Luke 13:34 - "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not." But this comes out nowhere more clearly than in Paul's great saying in II Cor. 5:18-21 - "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righeousness of God in him."

It is not surprising that God should give commandments to man, but it is sort of surprising that God should entreat man's will. It also throws light on the element of willfullness in man's rebellion against God. And we know the willfulness of man's sin is nothing short of rebellion.

Willful sin implies knowledge: When a person sins, willfully, then it is a sin against God, and there is no more renewal for them. Heb. 6:4-6 "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers the world to

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come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Where there is no knowledge of moral truth, there can be no sin in the full sense of the term. Perhaps this is implied in Paul's statement that where there is no law, neither is there transgression. Rom. 4:15 - "Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression." In Romans 7, Paul describes a state in which he says that at one time he was alive without the law, but when the commandment came, "sin revived, and I died." (Verses 7-11) When he came to know a certain thing as forbidden by the law, he did not thereby refrain from doing that thing, but rather came to do it. This shows that there was an intimate connection between a knowledge of the will of God and sin as an active principle in human behavior. Let us draw near to God.

In Christian love,
Homer Bryant

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"FINDING THAT BRIGHTER DAY!"

Thank you Lord for every blessing
For none are ever small.
Often those the world call tiny
Are the largest of all.

Thank you Lord for every trial
For 'twas how I learned to grow,
And in my darkest moments
Your love I really came to know.

Forgive me when I falter
And in self pity, I complain,
Don't let me o're look the rainbows
When my life has floods of rain.

Help me to live victorious
And in Your will to stay
For then and only then
Will I find that brighter day!

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"AS COLD WATERS TO A THIRSTY SOUL, SO IS GOOD NEWS FROM A FAR COUNTRY."

Prov. 25:25

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OLIVEHURST, CALIFORNIA

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We here at the Olivehurst Church of Christ are doing alright, except some of the members have had colds. But, this happens this time of the year. We were all saddened at the passing of Sister Bonnie Luther. She passed away November 26, 1989. She had been a faithful member for many years and will be missed by all the members here. We are sending twenty dollars to help with The Christian Courier. We enjoy reading it each month and pray that all is well there. Remember us in your prayers.

In Christian love,
Lee McDonald

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YUMA, ARIZONA

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Nell and I are here at Yuma with Ken and Verlie Baldwin and Sister and Gerald Warner. The meeting is over and I believe much good was done as there were lots of good fellowship, singing and lessons from many brethren as eleven congregations from far and near were represented, everyone seemed glad to be here.

We are very sorry to report Sister Verda Nelson, Ruth Duncan and Mary Smith are all in the hospital. We are all praying for them. From other congregations, Bro. Paul Hellum and Sis. Eva Nichols, and Bro. Earl Howe were also in the hospital again. I'm sure there might be others, but with the prayers of the brethren and God's mercy, we hope they all recover. We hope all the brethren are blessed in the coming year the it is used to the glory of God.

In Christian love,
Howard McCay

BELLFLOWER, CALIFORNIA

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Since last writing the congregation at Bellflower has enjoyed relatively good health, with the exception of Sister Myrtle Lee Clouse, who was not able to attend services one Sunday. She is better now and we are thankful to have her back with us. Sister Burdette Perigen returned from a lengthy visit with her son and daughter-in-law, Bill and Debra Taylor and granddaughter, Robin at Port Orchard, Washington. While there, whe was able to spend some time with Eva Nichols, who was recouperating from an operation. We're glad Sister Burdette enjoyed her trip, but are happy to have her back safely with us.

We are happy to report that our meeting has been scheduled for the week of July 8-15 and Brother Howard McCay has consented to speak for us. We are looking forward to hearing Brother Howard and beginning to make plans to support the meeting, both with our presence and, hopefully, bringing some visitors to hear Brother Howard's lessons. It is our hope that many of the brethren will plan to be with us for that week also. We are small in number and need the yearly "revival" of our spirits which takes place when we have a week of fellowship, fine lessons and good Christian fun with our brethren from far and near during our annual meeting, so please plan to be with us - we look forward to seeing you.

In Christian love,
Jerry Perigen
Bellflower, California

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"GIVING"

God gives us joy that we may give;
He gives us joy that we may share;
Sometimes He gives us loads to lift
That we may learn to bear.
For life is gladder when we give,
And love is sweeter when we share,
And heavy loads rest lightly too
When we have learned to bear.

-Author Unknown

GOSPEL MEETINGS

CEDAREDGE, CO	June 30 - July 8	Camp
BELLFLOWER, CA	July 8 - 15	Howard McCay
GLENWOOD, WA	July 29 - Aug. 5	Dan Teague
YAKIMA, WA	August 5 - 12	Camp

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DEATHS

We are saddened to hear of the death of one of God's children. Sister Bonnie Luther left to be with the Lord on November 26, 1989. Our sympathy goes out to her family and to all who were touched by her stay on earth.

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"Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being."

"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God: which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever: which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry."

"The Lord looseth the prisoners: the Lord openeth the eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous: the Lord preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down."

"The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord."

PSALM 146