



Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

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God's Protective Hedge

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Volume II, Number 5

- 3 PERSONAL FROM JOHN W. RITENBAUGH
The Elements of Motivation (Part One)
- 6 A READY ANSWER:
Hedged About on Every Side
—Mark DeSomer
- 9 *Is God a Male Chauvinist?*
—David F. Maas
- 10 PROPHECY WATCH:
Globalism (Part Eleven)
—Charles Whitaker
- 19 WORLD WATCH
—David C. Grabbe
- 20 BIBLE STUDY
The Parable of the Light
—Martin G. Collins

About Our Cover



When we become Christians, we receive many gifts and blessings from God. One that is frequently taken for granted is God's protective hedge about us. By it, we are shielded from Satan's most destructive attacks.
(ImageState)

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The Elements of Motivation

Part One

The gospel's sure promise of an endless life in glory in the Kingdom of God as the Father's spirit-composed children and Jesus Christ's brothers and companions seems so appealing and captivating that one wonders why we would need more motivation than the anticipation of its fulfillment. History and even our own reflections on our personal experiences prove that we need additional stimulation.

The Israelites' forty-year trek through the wilderness after their release from Egyptian slavery also provides a persuasive record. Of the over two million or so Israelites age twenty and above who left Egypt, only two men, Joshua and Caleb, are named as entering into the Promised Land! The Israelites were burying the bodies of those who failed until the time they crossed the Jordan River. Hebrews 4:1-2 admonishes us not to fall into the same manner of living:

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

The struggle to achieve some noteworthy goal is a popular theme for many inspirational biographies, novels, articles, and movies. In the late 1800s, Horatio Alger became famous by authoring a string of "rags to riches" stories that featured characters who, through pluck, grit, ingenuity, and seemingly tireless energy, overcame multitudes of problems to achieve success in the end. The characters in his stories never resorted to deceit or thievery, even though they confronted such vices. They always made their way in a righteous manner. Many inspired readers used them as role models for what they hoped to achieve.

Not much has changed in the intervening time.

People still find hope and inspiration in hearing the success stories of others, especially if they are dealing with true-to-life issues. One can buy "success" manuals in virtually any bookstore. Lecture circuits teem with those who are willing to sell their formulas to those who want to hear their testimonies. Many of these people are known as "motivational" speakers. Twenty-five years ago, my wife and I attended a "Positive Thinking Rally," during which one nationally known speaker after another supplied us with their perspectives for twelve straight hours on how to be motivated to produce success.

Obviously, motivation is a very common human problem, one that the Bible also addresses. The Bible contains many passages intended to prod us to keep moving in the proper direction. Nevertheless, the condition posed at the beginning of this article remains unresolved. If what God offers is so awesome, why do we need to be prodded with exhortation, encouragement, and correction?

It is because God has demanded that we live by faith (Hebrews 10:38-39). Thus, the "out of sight, out of mind" principle provides an almost constant resistance, testing whether we have a proper and purposeful direction to our life.

It is also because human nature is so attracted to the cultures it has created that it loves them almost desperately. Sometimes it is only with great difficulty that one can turn from them (I John 2:15-16). Even though we know intellectually that these cultures are evil, we are attracted to them and diverted away from the path of godly success (Galatians 1:4).

Moreover, the unseen spirit world lures us through lying persuasions away from the right goal (Ephesians 6:10-12). Sometimes we need motivation because of traits such as apathy and procrastination that dwell to some degree in all of us (Hebrews 2:1-3; 12:12-13). Finally, sometimes our pride self-righteously and pre-

sumptuously persuades us into thinking that we already have it made (Revelation 3:16-18).

Overall, a great many factors work against us. When we seriously consider the example of the extremely high failure rate of the Israelites in the wilderness, it may seem as though far more of these factors work against us than work to insure our success. The Israelites, however, operated with little faith. In addition, the Scriptures indicate that God gave very few of them His Holy Spirit, and therefore the love of God was not working in them. God gives His Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32), and the record of the Israelites is one of almost constant disobedience.

Since Jesus Christ was not in them, they did not have the faith of Christ, but our God is able to “supply all [our] need according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ” (Philippians 4:19). The reality is that we have far more working in our behalf than they. We have no valid reason to fail.

To Whom Much Is Given

During our pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God, we are required to meet many responsibilities. Fulfilling those responsibilities does not save us, but they nonetheless play a part in preparing us for life in God’s Kingdom. We must always remember Jesus’ admonition that “to whom much is given, from him much will be required” (Luke 12:48). God has given us a great deal to help us along the way, but we must somehow find the motivation to use His gifts to drive ourselves to live by faith—or all the graciously given knowledge and understanding goes to waste.

We have all heard the cliché, “Nothing is certain in life except death and taxes.” Surely, the person who coined this intended to inspire a cynical smile in those who reflect on its truth, for it succinctly grasps an element of life that everybody wearily experiences. In a similar manner, when a person is called into the church and converted, he begins to learn that this way of life contains certain features that everybody experiences. Certain common events and characteristics bind us into a social group, family, or church. It is this commonality, this sharing of particular elements, that forms these groupings.

Families usually share a common blood. In Acts 17, Paul drew on this truth when preaching in Athens, saying that the whole human family has at least one element in common: We all descend from Adam and Eve. In God’s Family, we must all repent, have faith to submit to His governance, and share the same Spirit. If we do not, it is certain we are not of the same spiritual family. We also experience the same general problems along the way, and the same general counsel helps everyone.

The world shares a common problem that sometimes

greatly affects us, creating circumstances that may require intense motivation for us to overcome. Even though an unconverted person may seem nice and possess moral character, their human spirit, of and by itself, is at war against God, and sooner rather than later, it will break out against Him and all who share His Spirit.

Jesus says in John 15:20, “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.” He warns in Luke 6:26, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” The unconverted world cannot help itself in this regard because of its slavery to human nature. The actions of worldly people can produce quite painful and discouraging obstacles for the converted to surmount. Somehow, the converted must find the resources to move through or around the tests thrown in their path by those who are unwittingly arrayed against them and being used to stop the heirs of salvation from completing their journey.

Herbert Armstrong’s *The Seven Laws of Success* has helped many through difficult circumstances because, taken together, those laws describe a basic pattern for success. Each is essential to success in virtually every endeavor. However, the most vital laws of success we need are *spiritual* in nature because the goal for which we strive is spiritual, as are the difficulties along the way.

We should also understand that the purpose of this series of articles on motivation is to create a focus for growth in our relationship with God, not to produce salvation, for salvation is clearly by grace through faith. Growth, however, produces fruit here and now and reward in the future, in God’s Kingdom. We are able to enjoy the abundant life through the fruit we produce (John 10:10), and by it, take comfort and encouragement in God’s calling.

This list of the elements of motivation makes no claims to being complete or being the only valid one. None of these elements stands alone; they overlap and interlock, and in many cases, depend on each other.

We Must Fear God

To begin, notice the importance of the fear of God to our success in His purpose:

- **Proverbs 1:7:** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.
- **Proverbs 9:10:** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
- **Proverbs 15:33:** The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility.

• **Job 28:20, 28:** From where then does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? . . . Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.

• **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14:** Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil.

A few more passages provide a contrast:

• **Psalms 36:1-4:** An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flatters himself in his own eyes, when he finds out his iniquity and when he hates. The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; he has ceased to be wise and to do good. He devises wickedness on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he does not abhor evil.

• **Hebrews 10:26-27, 30-31:** For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. . . . For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The biblical fear of God runs the gamut from a mild respect through a deep, abiding, and reverential awe to sheer terror—a terror that causes the skin to crawl, the hair to stand on end, the throat to release a scream, the bowels to move, or the body to faint or collapse, groveling on the ground in a vain attempt to disappear, as Isaiah did (Isaiah 6:5). Fear can be an extremely effective motivator. Many of us have seen, heard, or experienced something so fearsome that the “fight or flight” response kicked in. The terror moved us to take immediate steps to defend ourselves physically or seek protection by running from the danger.

However, fear can also be a two-edged sword. Though it undoubtedly motivates, it can also paralyze us into doing nothing but rolling ourselves into a fetal position. In relation to God, a most subtle and deceptive problem is that, because we cannot literally see Him, we do not feel that responding to Him is of immediate concern. In this way, fearing God is not like our reaction to a lion suddenly jumping out of the jungle and confronting us on the path.

The result, though, can be just as deadly! The major difference is timing. Because of God’s patience, the end comes more slowly if our reaction is not correct and no repentance occurs. Nonetheless, our relationship with God may die because not having the proper fear invites apathy and procrastination. Our fear must have enough of an “edge” that we are motivated to act correctly—but not so much that we are paralyzed into inaction. That “edge” grows as true knowledge of Him increases.

Some may think that God does not require of us this level of fear. However, for “trembles” in Isaiah 66:2, the Septuagint uses a Greek word that means a reverential awe that has an “edge” to it. God will “look on” a person who has this kind of fear. Without the proper fear of God in us, there will be precious little reciprocation of His love shed abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5).

Romans 12:1 makes it clear that overcoming in this way of life requires sacrifice. We all know how costly sacrifice is sometimes. Our apprehension of making sacrifices required to submit to God’s will stops us on occasions, motivating us to draw back from obeying. In this case, the problem is fearing the wrong thing! Sometimes, the degree of the fear of God we need comes close to sheer terror because we are often so difficult to convince!

However, what is necessary as a matter of course is an abiding reverential awe.

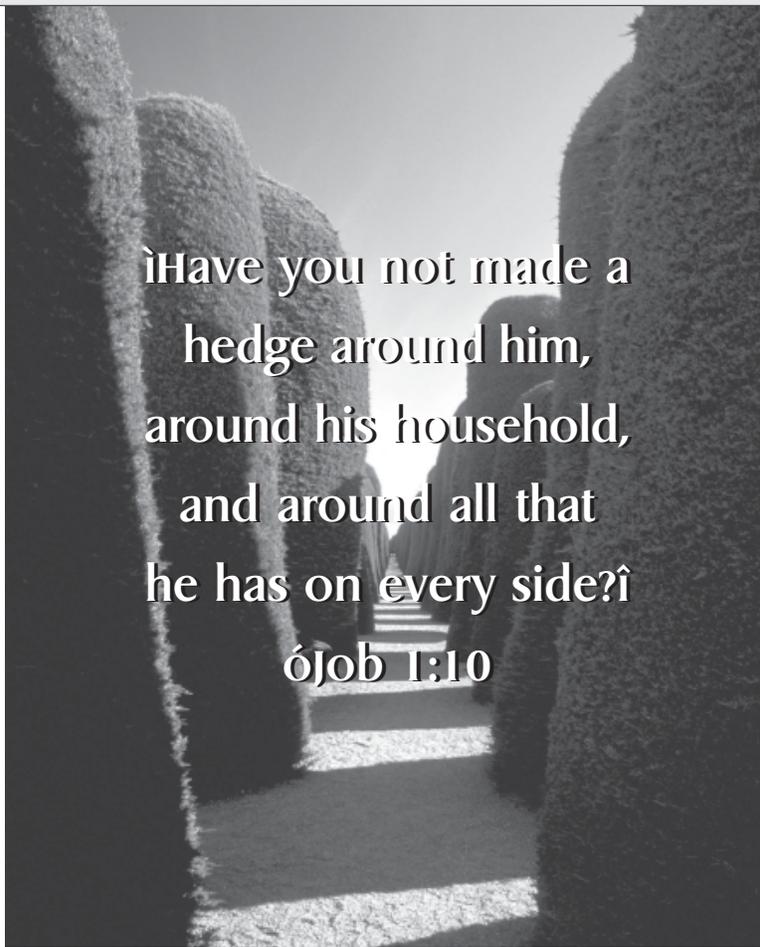
Merely Following or Truly Fearing?

We all understand that sheep have a strong inclination to follow, to go along with what other sheep in the flock are doing. I once read that, if a shepherd is herding his flock into a pen, and he places a bar a foot or so off the ground across the gate so that the first sheep has to jump over it to get in, then he removes the bar, the following sheep will continue jumping as they pass through the gate based on what the leading sheep did!

Years ago, my wife and I owned a small flock of lambs in partnership with our neighbor. They escaped from our pasture one Sabbath morning by “worrying” a fence until they were able to push out through the hole. Once one lamb went through, the others followed. We did not know they were gone until a neighbor about a half-mile away called to let us know our sheep were on her property. They had followed a railroad track cut into the side of a steep embankment until the land leveled off in a wooded area. They were scattered in the wooded area.

As I approached, I began to speak to them. They turned and began walking toward our pasture. Soon,

(continued on page 16)



“Have you not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side?”
— Job 1:10

Hedged About On Every Side

God is continually and constantly involved in our lives. Yet, He is not dragging us to participate in His way; we always have a choice to choose God’s way or to continue in Satan’s way. God calls or draws us to Him by Jesus Christ (John 6:44), and He leads us in growing in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18). All along the way, Satan is whispering in our ears, as it were, trying to tempt and deceive us to stray from God’s way and eventually reject it.

In most cases, God does not drag us against our will, and Satan cannot. Though God forced Jonah to preach to the Ninevites and stunned Paul on the road to Damascus, they still had choices to make along the way. In a similar way, Judas Iscariot, as the “son of perdition” (John 17:12), be-

trayed his Master and fulfilled prophecy when “Satan entered him” (John 13:27; Psalm 41:9). From opposite sides, God and Satan attempt to direct us to go their ways, and we choose our path.

Notice, in the case of Job, how God works from Satan’s perspective:

Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed

the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.” (Job 1: 8-10)

What does it mean that God “made a hedge” around Job? A hedge is a fence, boundary, or barrier to provide enclosure and protection. In other words, God insulated Job from the things Satan would have liked to do to him. God does the same for us. Under the safety of our most powerful and loving Father, nothing can compromise our protection. God provides this hedge as much as He determines we need under any given situation.

As it was with Job, being hedged about happens at least partly by the application of the knowledge of God’s truth in our lives. When we know the truth, we are free to make proper

decisions (John 8:32), and these decisions will keep us from the destructive consequences of sin. In His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asks the Father to keep His disciples through His name (which describes the attributes of God's character, which we learn through His Word), as well as to sanctify us by His truth (John 17:11, 17). Knowing God and His truth guards us against error and its results.

Trials

Satan knew he was powerless against Job so long as God's hedge about him remained. The same thing happens with us when we are close to God and living righteously, shunning evil (see Job 1:1). If we are willing to look, we will realize that God has indeed hedged us about in many ways in our own lives.

God promises that He will never try us beyond our ability to endure, and that He will always give us a way of escape (I Corinthians 10:13). Knowing this, we know that God would not allow Satan to do any more to us than God knows we would be able to endure.

Yet, God did not know absolutely what Job would do when the pressure came—although He undoubtedly had a very good idea—just as He did not know for sure what Abraham would do when told to sacrifice Isaac until the knife was falling (Genesis 22:12). He knew Job *could* successfully endure the trial if he chose to exercise the faith toward God he had developed. He knew Job had the strength of faith and character that he needed to succeed.

God allowed Satan to bring trials upon Job to test the man's faith and true character. Once Job learned what God intended the trial to teach him, he would come out the other end stronger in faith and knowledge than he was before it.

Because God is sovereign, He can intervene in our lives at any time. In His omnipotence, He can do all things. However, God has reasons for the things He does and does not do—as well as

for the degree He hedges us about from additional trials from Satan.

God brings us to a point in our lives where He tests us to see what we will do. Sometimes God is waiting for us to do something, and sometimes He wants to see what our attitude will be while we wait. Our responsibility is to maintain a proper attitude and perspective at all times, not expecting God to do the things for us that we can do for ourselves, but waiting patiently and faithfully while God chooses the right moment to intervene.

One thing we seldom consider is how many times Abraham failed when God tested his faith before he succeeded. The Bible records a few accounts of his failures (e.g., Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18), but how many went undocumented? As Abraham's spiritual progeny, we are similar. God has given us multiple opportunities to succeed or fail. He wants to know what choices we will make and what it will take for us to make the correct ones.

We often fail. When we do, God continues to work with us to teach and strengthen us. Each time He feels we have grown, He will bring us to the point of trial and choice. He will watch to see what choices we will make.

By this process, we will all one day come to the point where God will be able to say of us, "Now I know that he will obey Me." In certain instances, we may have already proven our resolve to go God's way and to do what is right; in some things, God already "knows." But in the areas He is still working on, the trials will continue.

Every trial is an "opportunity" for us to learn and to prove to God and to ourselves what we truly have in our hearts. Each trial is an opportunity to strengthen our faith and to confirm that God is always with us and that His way is the only way that works. It is an opportunity to choose God's way, which is our protection and way of escape.

God's Mercy

God limits Satan in what he can do by the merciful hedge that He has placed around us. Even

so, sometimes what He allows is very painful. When we ask for mercy from the pain but feel He has not given it, it does not mean He has not granted it.

For instance, God shows mercy by preventing circumstances from being worse than they are. If He did not extend mercy by hedging us about to one degree or the other, Satan would destroy us. It is the Devil's goal.

Even though God's mercy prevents our trials from being worse than they are, He requires them to be difficult enough that they test us to the extent of our abilities to endure them. Only by so doing will we learn and grow in strength and faith from them.

To look at this optimistically, it is God's *blessing* that the trials of our life are not worse than they are. But it is also a good thing that trials are so difficult. By no other process can He instill in us the perfect, righteous character—the image of God—that we need to be in His Kingdom.

Consider the hedge God put around Job. God's mercy is shown in His not allowing Satan to do any more or go any further in his torment of Job. God limited Satan's activities by the hedge He placed around Job. God set the parameters of what Satan was allowed to do to Job then—and to us now.

The Bible describes Satan as roaming to and fro over the earth like a lion seeking someone to devour (Job 1:7; I Peter 5:8). God's hedge about us prevents Satan from succeeding in his homicidal rampage, and the closer we are to God the greater our resistance to Satan's assaults. Generally, our ability to defend against the Devil's attacks increases by the degree we yield to God and the truths found in His Word.

Within the boundaries God has placed, Satan has free reign to try to deceive us, trick us, or take us off God's path, just as he did with Adam and Eve and with Job. The Bible promises that, if we resist the Devil, he will flee from us (James 4:7). How do we resist him? We find the answer

in the same verses: “Therefore submit to God. . . . Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (verses 7-8). By choosing to do what God says, we repulse the attacks of the Adversary.

Jesus Christ did the same thing in resisting Satan. He did not lean on His own understanding and rationalizations but relied upon every word of God (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3). The truth was His rock of defense and confidence. By it, He knew what was absolutely right and wrong. Once He chose it and used it, “the devil left Him” (Matthew 4:11). And so he will slink away from us too.

Our Own Choices

The fact that the Bible tells us that man devises his own ways (Proverbs 16:9) and chooses the direction he will go (Proverbs 14:12) tells us that we pick our own path to walk. That God says He sets before us the choice of life or death, blessing or cursing (Deuteronomy 30:19) tells us that He does not make our choices

for us. That God says we will reap what we have sown for ourselves (Galatians 6:7) tells us that we decide what seeds to plant.

We bring many—if not most or all—of our trials upon ourselves by the choices we make. We decide according to the spirit we are listening and yielding to. Yet, it is this very free moral agency coupled with the guidance of God that is the strength of building true character.

When we are tried, we make our choices based on what we understand or what we think we understand. We even ignorantly make choices based on things we do not understand. Consequently, we give Satan more free reign to work havoc in our lives, but only as far as God allows.

If God made everything happen by divine fiat and altered the conse-

quences of our choices and actions, then we would probably never know the true results of our choices or learn whether our choices were either good or bad. Thankfully, He does not do this. God uses every trial as an opportunity for Him to observe and to know how we are doing, where we are headed, and what is in our hearts. He sees this through the choices we make.

God’s Plan

Every time God allowed Satan to go a little further with the disruption of Job’s life—whether



Adrian Fisher/Georg Gerster

it was destroying his possessions or ruining his health—it was no greater trial than God permitted. The trial was not greater than God knew Job already had the ability to endure.

Every time Satan does something to us, he thinks he is creating a problem for us. In reality, Satan is just helping God help us to develop the character we lack. God knows what we lack and what kind of stress to put us under to strengthen us. Satan does nothing more than God permits. Satan is powerless unless God peels the hedge back to allow further testing.

Therefore, when a trial confronts us, even if it is unto death, we must know that the trial is not greater than God knows we can endure. We must remember that He allows the trial for the strengthening of our faith. We

must realize that the trial is for our learning and that God is in it with us.

Job and the other heroes of faith may have felt at times that they were alone while enduring their trial, just as we do sometimes. However, at just the right moment, God intervenes and the trial is taken away. If we have been successful, God blesses us, just as He blessed Job with more than he had before (Job 42:12-16).

We have a merciful God and Father. He uses the situations our choices have gotten us into to teach us. He hedges us about and protects us as we would protect our own children (see Proverbs 22:6). When we fail, we need to just pick ourselves up, realizing that God is there to get us through to the end as long as we continue to do our part in yielding to His way. He who endures to the end in faith will be saved (Matthew 24:13).

Satan is powerless in the face of God, and amazingly, he is powerless before our faces too, unless we choose to yield to his temptations. When we yield to Satan’s ways, we give him control and power over us, and that is the way to destroy godly character. We can put on the image of God only by His character-building process; trying to do it any other way is submitting to the Devil.

Even if we are righteous in all of our ways, like Job, God still allows trials to strengthen us. The trials we have should show us and encourage us that God knows we have what it takes to succeed. We can take comfort in knowing that God, our strength, has hedged us about as He did for Job as long as we are obeying God’s Word in our lives.

Once we understand this, we can say with the psalmist: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear. . . . The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Psalm 46:1-2, 7).

—Mark DeSommer

IS GOD A MALE CHAUVINIST?

In April 2002, the International Bible Society and Zondervan Publishers released a gender-neutral New Testament, the *Today's New International Version*, with the objective of replacing the masculine-dominated language with more "politically correct" expressions. Among the thousands of intrusive changes are the substitution of "children of God" for "sons of God" in Matthew 5:9 and "a person is justified by faith" for "a man is justified by faith" in Romans 3:28.

In his article "What's Wrong with Gender-Neutral Bible Translations," Dr. Wayne Grudem, Professor of Theology and President of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, takes issue with many of the wrong-headed premises that drive this burning obsession to emasculate (as well as feminize) Scripture. He cites using "inoffensive" plural pronouns such as replacing "he should call for the elders of the church" with "they should call for the elders of the church" (James 5:14-15); or using the pesky journalistic "you," substituting "in your heart you may plan your course, but the Lord determines your steps" for "a man's mind plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). In addition, the generic "man" in Genesis 1:27 gives way to "God created humankind." In some cases, the gender inoffensive "mortal" substitutes for "son of man." Other extreme measures identified by Dr. Grudem include making the army of Israel gender-neutral, substituting "warriors" for "men of war" (Numbers 31:49); eliminating "son of man" in the Old Testament and replacing this term with "human being" 106 times; neutering fathers and sons, replacing this term with "mortals" or gender-

neutral "orphans."

Dr Grudem insists that all such changes amount to a timid concession to politically correct societal pressure to adopt gender-neutral Bible translations even at the expense of accuracy and clarity. Other ludicrous proposals identified by Grudem include the manufacturing of new pronouns to replace "he," "him," or "his." The willing accomplices of this obsession to mangle the language are designers of English style manuals who encourage peppering the manuscript with the ubiquitous but awkward "he/she," "he or she," or the plural "they" to eliminate the "offensive" masculine pronoun "he."

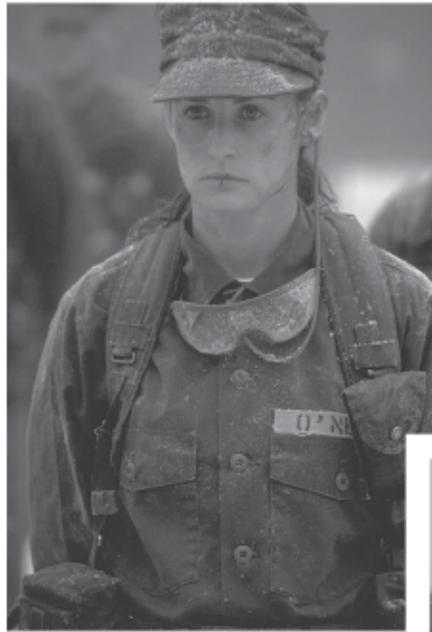
These "biblical egalitarians" and "evangelical feminists" have taken

their cue from the radical feminists of the 1960s, determined to mute the patriarchal culture of the biblical writers. According to Grudem, "[I]f all generic singular statements are removed from the Bible, then the ability to think of a representative individual who stands for a whole group will have been removed—for we will have no words to formulate our thoughts [in those instances]." Stylist William Zinsser in his *On Writing Well* complains, "A style that converts every 'he' into a 'they' will quickly turn to mush." Zinsser deplores overloading manuscripts with plurals because he believes they weaken writing by making it difficult to visualize the subject.

SWAPPING ROLES

The late J. S. Bois occasionally would use the pronoun "she" to refer to the Deity. In a recent church service, Bishop Marshall Gilmore of the CME (Christian Methodist Episcopal) Church raised some eyebrows in the audience by referring to God Almighty as "She." In our egalitarian, politically correct society, educators and politicians have attempted to blur what they consider to be stereotypical gender roles.

(continued on page 14)



Hollywood panders to feminism by releasing movies like *G.I. Jane*, which turns gender roles upside-down.



GLOBALISM

The International Criminal

Last month, we noted the deep-seated differences between American and European governmental systems, focusing on the structure and operation of the European Union. Not all tents of Shem are created equal. Does this difference present a threat to American democratic institutions here at home? Is it a danger to American interests abroad?

The just-recently inaugurated International Criminal Court (ICC) is based on Europe's model of governmental structure. As such, it provides a case study showing the irreconcilable differences between American constitutionalism and European federalism. Should the ICC gain stature as a *bona fide* international judiciary body, it will become a clear and present danger to America's ability to conduct her foreign policy in her own interests. It will also seriously undermine the right of American citizens to determine their own national domestic policy. We need to investigate this further.

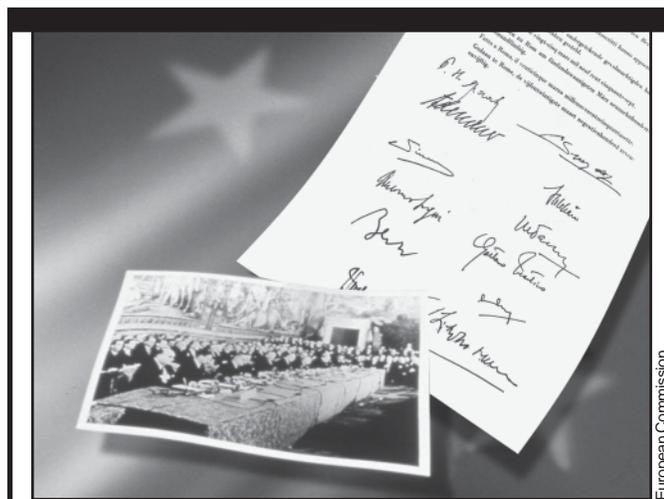
Although supported by the Clinton Administration as part of its efforts to support global integration, the Rome conference, where the ICC treaty was hammered out in the spring and summer of 1997, was captured by an international gang of anti-Americanists. Their antagonism toward America was so unabashed that they purposefully crafted the treaty to

contravene her authority and prerogatives. For instance, they insisted that *no* reservations be added to the Treaty. That provision would force the Senate of the United States to ratify the treaty as it stood, *without* any changes.

The United States Senate has al-

jurisdiction of the treaty.

The gang of Rome had the presumption to tell the most august legislative body in the world that it could not rewrite *their* "Statute of Rome," as the Treaty fittingly came to be called. That is precisely why Mr. Clinton never presented the treaty to the Senate. He knew its "no reservations" clause so attacked the Senate's prerogatives that it would stand no chance of ratification. He would be badly embarrassed in the international community he so seriously "courted."



European Commission

Treaty of Rome, 1956

The Treaty of Rome began what became the European Union in 1956. Another treaty, the Statute of Rome, crafted in 1997, established the International Criminal Court.

ways claimed the right to ratify treaties by attaching to them clearly stated "understandings" and "reservations." These both have the effect of modifying the treaty. "Understandings" define the terms used in the treaty in a way acceptable to the American government. "Reservations" exclude certain activities or persons from the

ICC's jurisdiction applies to individuals accused of crimes under the Statute, *often regardless of whether their governments have ratified it or not.* Not only do those who actually commit the alleged crimes fall under the Statute's jurisdiction, but also their commanders; presidents, prime ministers, and members of leg-

The Birth of the ICC

Having been ratified by the required sixty nations, the ICC came to birth on April 11, 2002. The Court consists of 18 justices who will represent "the principal legal systems of the world."¹ The treaty also establishes the Office of the Prosecutor, who is charged with the conduct of investigations and prosecutions. The

prophecy watch



Part Eleven

International Court and Bad Law

islative bodies can be arrested, detained, convicted, and imprisoned by the Court.²

As constituted, the ICC could ask any government, signatory or not to the Treaty of Rome, to hand over a citizen for trial—even an elected official or military personnel acting under orders. It could ask the United States to hand over a citizen accused of acts committed even *within* the boundaries of the United States, if the acts

were thought to be in violation of international law. Never mind that the ICC has no respect for the guarantees provided by the United States Constitution’s Bill of Rights! Such guarantees follow “an English common law tradition that means *nothing* to international authorities.”³

It is easy to see that the Pinochet imbroglio would certainly be the first of many. While in Britain for medical reasons, Augusto Pinochet, a retired

The real issue, however, was much different. The real issue was national sovereignty. U.S. Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) explains it in the context of American law.

[T]he Rome treaty purports to hold American citizens under its jurisdiction—even though the United States has neither signed nor ratified the treaty. Put another way, it claims sovereign authority over American citizens without their consent. . . . There is only one source of legitimacy of the U.S. government’s policies—and that is the consent of the American people.⁵

No international law permits one nation’s courts to sit in judgment of the citizens or officials of another nation. Most international judiciaries operate with the consent of the concerned parties, as in the case of the World Court. Nuremberg is neither an exception nor an aberration of this principle.

There, the victorious allied nations *became* the government of Germany, as a condition of the treaty. They later worked to establish two duly constituted sovereign states of Germany—East and West, which, still later, united.

In reality, Nation A, by establishing a court to try a citizen of Nation B, tells Nation B that it is subject to the

dictator of Chile, was detained at the behest of a “pip-squeak” Spanish bureaucrat.⁴ At the time of his visit, he was under the protection provided by international conventions (*i.e.*, diplomatic passport). At issue, ostensibly, was Pinochet’s alleged responsibility for crimes against Spanish citizens living in Chile during the dictator’s tenure.

Nuremberg, 1945

The Nuremberg War Crimes Trials should not be used as a precedent for convening the ICC. Then, the Allies *were* the government of Germany, not an outside entity.



National Archives



National Archives

prophecy watch

laws of Nation A—that it is in fact no longer a sovereign nation. Nation A’s establishment of such a court would be “in effect, an attempt at conquest by courts.”⁶ In practice, Nation A’s activities would certainly be interpreted by Nation B as an act of war, inviting open belligerence.

Chile, so far from Europe, so relatively weak, could of course not initiate hostilities over Pinochet’s “kidnapping.” The former dictator’s detainment was not a step for justice so much as it was the bullying of a small sovereign power by a big power. For those with eyes to see, this matter was in fact the tentative stirrings of the still somnolent “dreary empire” of the Beast. All this in the name of law and justice.

The ICC and American Constitutionalism

From an American point of view, the dominant difficulty with the Statute of Rome lies in the fact that it is

... a stealth approach to eroding constitutionalism. . . . This difficulty stems from the authority purportedly vested in the ICC to create authority outside of (and superior to) the U.S. Constitution, and to inhibit the full constitutional autonomy of all three branches of the U.S. government. . . .⁷

It inhibits the working of the American Constitution in three ways. First, it replaces specific national laws, reflecting the values of a particular people, with “vague and all-encompassing” generalities. By their nature, these generalities are easily susceptible to interpretations that happen to fit some current political agenda, such as the international initiative against capital

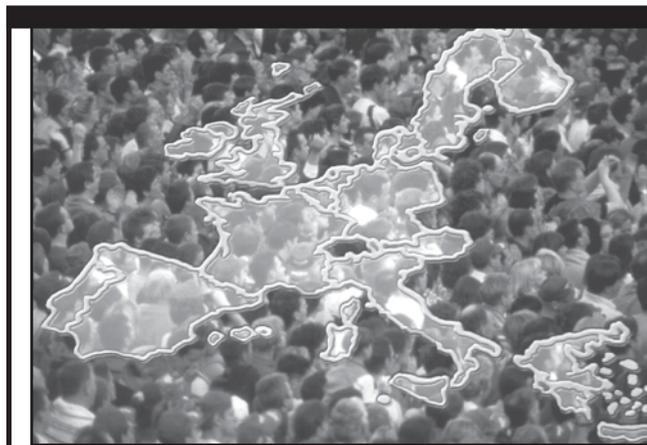
U.S. Constitution

The U.S. Constitution provides rights not recognized by the ICC, as well as the stipulation that the Senate must ratify such a treaty before it becomes law.



punishment. The jurisdiction of the ICC is extremely vague, lying in four areas: “genocide,” “crimes against humanity,” “war crimes,” and “crimes of aggression.” Of these, the first, genocide, is fairly well defined by the 1948 Genocide Convention. “Crimes against humanity” and “war crimes” are vaguely and broadly defined, and “crimes of aggression” are completely undefined.⁸

Held up against the standards of American constitutionalism, the Statute is unacceptable by virtue of its imprecision. Invoking the “void for vagueness” doctrine, the United States Supreme Court has frequently invalidated laws that fail to define *exactly* what they prohibit. These are just the kind of laws the ICC



European Commission

Bad Law

The ICC is set up after the manner of the European Union—with substantial power yet unaccountable to an electorate. It is simply bad law.

wishes to enforce. Under the vaguely stated definitions of the Statute of Rome, an American President could not conduct a war without fear of future prosecution for inexactly defined “war crimes.” Indeed, so vague are its statements that an ICC captured by totalitarian interests in 1945 may have found the United States guilty of war crimes for its bombing campaigns of Germany or the Japanese Islands in World War II.⁹

Second, the treaty is contrary to American constitutionalism in that it simply puts the ICC “out there,” not attached to any popularly elected

legislature or executive. In America, laws are created by a popularly elected legislative body, enforced by a popularly elected executive, and adjudicated by courts that are themselves subject to the “rule of law.” The Framers of the United States’ Constitution created this process to ensure that laws were “subject to popular accountability and structured to protect liberty.”¹⁰ The ICC, lacking accountability to any popularly elected executive or to any legislative body, becomes a “law unto itself.” The result of its absolute power would certainly be its absolute corruption.

Third, and as a corollary to the second point, the treaty represents an attack on American constitutionalism by creating a prosecutorial office distinguished by its *lack* of accountability to any popularly elected executive or legislative body. Since the treaty empowers the Office of the Prosecutor to “act independently as a separate organ of the court” (Article 42), the Prosecutor is virtually plenipotentiary, yet without accountability to any sovereign state. He is even independent of the United Nations Security Council.

Overall, the ICC’s structure looks suspiciously like that of the European Union. It is no surprise that it would share the Union’s “democracy deficit,” for the Court’s architects

modeled its structure after the bureaucrat-centric, elitist European Union. In the ICC's schema, there simply is not a legislative body, no checks, no balances—only an organization with vaguely stated “mandates,” substantial power, and the proclivity to be captured by non-governmental organizations, themselves notorious for their lack of accountability to an electorate. As such, interest groups with purely political agenda would certainly dominate the Court in time. Justice would be the *last* interest the Court would serve.

Bad Law

God directs Ezekiel 20 to modern Israel. God will send upon a rebellious people “statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live” (verse 25). In context, God allows “the children” (verse 21) of an idolatrous and Sabbath-breaking people to develop wrong-headed laws

in their scattered condition. Today, Israel at large, America in particular, is blindly accepting “bad law” in the interests of leading a “global village.”

At heart, the danger of the ICC lies in the fact that it is a *judicial* body. It has about it an air (rarefied at best) of law. Having a deep-seated respect for law, Americans may allow the ICC to gain a foothold as the principal judiciary of international law. If they

ever do so, they will be handing over a good piece of their national sovereignty, allowing power to fall into the hands of a gang of European-led kidnapers.

Next month, we will conclude this series by looking at the nature of a growing body of misguided international law that threatens American freedoms.

—Charles Whitaker

Endnotes

¹ John R. Bolton, “Courting Danger: What’s Wrong with the International Criminal Court?” *The National Interest*, Winter 1998/1999, p. 60. Mr. Bolton, an attorney, is currently Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security. He has also served as Senior Vice President of the American Enterprise Institute, as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs in the George H. W. Bush administration, and as Assistant Attorney General in the Reagan administration.

² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³ Jeremy Rabkin, “International Law vs. the American Constitution: Something’s Got to

Give,” *The National Interest*, Spring 1999, p. 30 (emphasis added). Mr. Rabkin teaches international law and United States constitutional law at Cornell University. His most recent book is *Why Sovereignty Matters*.

⁴ Mark Steyn, *Sunday Telegraph*, November 29, 1998.

⁵ Jesse Helms, “American sovereignty and the UN,” *The National Interest*, Winter 2000/2001, p. 31. Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) is a member and former chairman of the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

⁶ Rabkin, *ibid.*, p. 33.

⁷ Bolton, *ibid.*, p. 62.

⁸ Rabkin, *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁹ Bolton, *ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

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“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” —Luke 6:46

(continued from page 9)

In the recent decade, Hollywood has attempted to cash in on the fascination with women and men swapping traditional roles. One typical example is the movie *G.I. Jane*, which casts a woman in the role of an elite Special Forces combat soldier. The more she “got the best” of the men, the more audiences loved it.

Likewise, the formula in which a housewife takes on an executive CEO position, leaving the husband to assume a dutiful “Mister Mom” role seems to have captured the imagination of many Hollywood screenwriters. We are mindful of the row Hillary Clinton created by disparaging the supposed denigrated “female” task of baking cookies. Several years ago, a major network did some investigative reporting illustrating how female firefighters were adapting to their non-traditional roles. As petite physiques buckled under the strain of heavy, bulky equipment, questions about equality of opportunity were again raised.

I once worked for a female supervisor who had some rather bizarre misconceptions about certain leadership expectations associated with traditional male-dominated executive positions. Her absurd attempt at incorporating what she assumed to be typical “male” characteristics such as swaggering, bullying, and intimidating reminded me of equally ludicrous attempts of female impersonators and drag queens parodying the supposed “female” traits of lisping, simpering, swishing, and displaying a limp wrist. As my sister-in-law so aptly stated, “What ‘real’ woman do you know really acts that way?” Likewise, women supervisors who attempt to shatter the glass ceiling can become pathetic parodies assiduously trying to emulate the very thing they most despise.

Several years ago at the Feast of Tabernacles, one minister suggested that there would be no Women’s Lib movement if legitimate needs of women were met in the first place. The same could be said about the labor movement and the Civil Rights movement. Swapping roles is not the answer.

Women have entered the workforce in areas traditionally reserved for men, such as in executive and emergency positions.



MALE AND FEMALE

Back in May 1973, the pastor of the Minneapolis congregation asked the women whether they felt a secret kinship with Women’s Lib. He also posed the question, “Is God a male chauvinist?” After all, had not God made the husband the head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23)? Had not Paul asked women to stifle themselves in church (II Timothy 2:12)? Did God make only males in His image, and then as an afterthought made woman (as Archie Bunker suggested) a cheaper cut?

Helen Reddy became so incensed at this attitude that, upon acceptance of the Grammy Award for her record “I am Woman,” she said, “I thank God because She made it all possible.” That shocked most people in the 1970s, but in 2002, with the advent of a gender-neutral Bible, it does not seem so far-fetched to some.

To set the record straight on what God Almighty had in mind about man and woman, we need to go back to Genesis 1:26, where God says, “Let Us make man [humankind or human beings—not as Archie Bunker thought, only men or males] in Our image, according to Our likeness.” Both male and female together are created in the image of God.

In Genesis 2:24, when the marriage covenant is ordained, man and woman are designated as “one flesh”—one unit. God is indeed creating a Family modeled after His own characteristics, but not all Godlike characteristics are found in one sex or gender, any more than they are found in one race.

It bears repeating that God did not create a superior and inferior sex, any more than He created a superior and inferior race.

God has characteristics (revealed throughout Scripture) that are considered to be masculine and feminine. Our own bodies mirror this. Human reproductive glands, for example, manufacture both male and female hormones. Women’s ovaries produce small, but significant amounts of androgen (a male hormone). Likewise, men’s testicular canals produce not only testosterone, but also a small but significant amount of estrogen (female hormones). God has also designed the human anatomy so that both sexes have vestigial equipment of the opposite sex. No one is 100% male or 100% female—not even the most muscular man or the curviest woman can claim this distinction.

Together, men and women make up a composite image of the living God. Individually, we are incomplete, partial, and lacking something in our personality. One of the reasons God gave us marriage state (a God-plane relationship) is to learn how the other half of the God-image behaves. We learn from our mate’s traits and characteristics of the opposite sex in order to become complete God-beings. The Bruce Willis/Russell Crowe macho-warriors and the Nicole Kidman/Meg Ryan goddess stereotypes are insufficient models for a God-being. God the Father is not in the process of making macho-warriors or goddesses, but balanced members of His Family.

Part of this process—incredible as

it sounds—involves the male incorporating Godlike feminine (not effeminate) characteristics such as tenderness, mercy, and patience. Similarly, the female needs to learn or adopt masculine (not tomboy or butch) characteristics such as strength, assertiveness, and decisiveness. The above-mentioned pastor isolated 22 godly characteristics—eleven masculine and eleven feminine—suggesting that this rudimentary list barely scratched the surface. However, if we make a thorough search of the Scripture, we would find the masculine and feminine traits of God equally distributed. Ironically, if gender-neutral advocates had their way, these delightful differences would be blotted out.

INCORPORATING TRAITS

Space permits elaboration on only a few from each list. We see ample and abundant masculine traits in the Bible: strength, power, decisiveness, aggressiveness, provider, ruler, and leader. Feminine traits are also abundant: beauty, grace, mercy, tenderness, caring, and affectionate. In order to qualify as members of God's Family, both men and women need to incorporate all these characteristics into their personalities.

Men often have a hard time being

as loving and affectionate as their wives are. Little boys know that Mommies make the best pillows, and Daddies make the best armrests. If some of the women in the congregation would enlist the aid of the men in the congregation to hold their babies, the men might break out in a cold sweat. Nevertheless, motherly feelings and instincts come from God. It did not bother Jesus Christ to express a motherly instinct: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem. . . ! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. . . !" (Matthew 23:37).

Back in 1980, when my brothers and I got together on the home farm for a family reunion, I noticed one of my brothers holding his little boy on his lap, caressing him lovingly. As I walked into the room, he doubled up his fist and gave him a vigorous love-tap. He evidently did not want his big brother to question his masculinity. In our family, largely influenced by North European culture, hugging, kissing, and caressing were designated as mushy and undesirable. Even Mom did not hug us much past the age of seven. My brothers and I were conditioned that it was a shame for a man to show his emotions or to cry.

By contrast, one of the most godly men I have ever known in my life was a stocky Ukrainian immigrant in the Minneapolis church, the late Igor Kubik. He showed a Godlike balance between strength and sensitivity.

My family adopted Igor and Nina Kubik as surrogate parents. From

time to time, Igor would grab his daughters, Tonia and Lydia, and his sons Victor, Oleh, and Eugene, giving them a big Ukrainian bear hug and a rather fulsome kiss. I was at the same time uncomfortable and envious at this display of emotion.

Igor once told me, "My children may not have had a lot of material things, but at least they have had enough love." The Kubik children, now grown up with families of their own, are some of the most balanced human beings I have ever met.

An essential Godlike masculine trait is His strength and power. Scriptural references that emphasize this trait are I Chronicles 29:12 and Job 40:9. Notice, however, Psalm 62:7 (*The Amplified Bible*): "He is my Rock of unyielding strength and impenetrable hardness." Daughters should occasionally be assertive and decisive, having deep inner strength rather than be kicked and pushed around. It makes it easier for her to grow into the rest of her feminine role. Adult women must also learn to be assertive and decisive. The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:16 was out wheeling and dealing in property, and verse 17 says, "She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms."

Many women in the church of God are real take-charge ladies, assertive and decisive women. My own wife and my mother-in-law fall into that category, but their assertiveness does not detract from their femininity one iota, just as Igor Kubik's love for his children did not detract from his masculinity. Not only do these not detract from essential manhood or womanhood, they add a dimension of Godhood.

Jesus says that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, we will not enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 5:20). By this same reasoning, unless we exceed our natural selves, we will not enter the God Family. As Christian men and women, we should seek to go beyond self-actualization to God-actualization—to the point that, when we look into our spouse's eyes, we should be able to see the very image of God Almighty.

—DAVID F. MAA&



God desires men to reflect His character traits of love and affection just as much as those of leadership and strength.

(continued from page 5)

they had regrouped and begun following me. Although I was certainly concerned that a train might come along, my major worry was how I was going to get them up that steep ten-foot-high embankment, back through that narrow opening, and into the pasture.

When I arrived at that point, they were too timid to follow my voice and I up the embankment. The only thing I could do was wrestle and drag the sheep up and shove them through the opening. I thought I was going to have to repeat that same procedure with all of them, but to my delighted surprise, once I shoved the first one through the hole and into the pasture, the rest came on their own! What I feared actually turned out to be very easy because of this strong instinct to follow.

Human beings tend to share this proclivity. We even call it the “sheep instinct” or “running with the herd.” This influence moves people to buy and wear the same clothing because “everybody” is wearing whatever happens to be popular. It also motivates “keeping up with the Joneses.” We are nervous about standing out from the crowd and perhaps becoming the objects of scorn and derision.

However, this proclivity works against us as Christians because it can easily influence us into going the way of this world. In this case, it takes a strong willingness not to conform to what everybody around us is thinking, doing, and perhaps even wearing. Such a circumstance will reveal who we really fear.

Nehemiah, the Non-Conformist

Nehemiah 5:14-15 introduces this aspect of Nehemiah’s character.

Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor’s provisions. But the former governors who had been before me laid burdens on the people, and took from them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver; yes, even their servants bore rule over the people, but I did not do so, because of the fear of God.

Few of us know much about Nehemiah or the times he lived in. Our mental picture of him is that he was austere, harsh, and perhaps even pharisaical. From what the Bible presents of him, he was undoubtedly serious about his responsibilities, brave, and circumspect, and he loved and feared God. His character

displays a lofty nobleness. Regardless of our estimation, God thinks highly of him, and his life was so remarkable He included a few vignettes of it in His Word for our instruction.

When the Persian king appointed him governor of the Jewish exiles who had returned to Palestine from Babylon, Nehemiah discovered that the governors before him were in the habit of “squeezing” the people for their own gain. Nobody would have wondered if Nehemiah had done the same. Is that not the way people in government operate? Everybody does it! The people would have simply shrugged their shoulders, fully expecting it as the way things are done. It was the custom. Nehemiah’s standard, however, was exceedingly higher: His hands must be absolutely clean.

Why did he do it? He feared God! Nehemiah’s way of living reached down into the nitty-gritty of everyday life and may have involved considerable sacrifice. He would not operate the way the world does. Certainly, the laborer is worthy of his hire, but sometimes sacrifices must be made, and Nehemiah determined this was one of them. He would not conform to what everyone else did. Several other vignettes from the same book confirm this was not a one-time occurrence. Unless we are willing to say, “No,” to what everybody else is doing, and do it often, our Christian life will be static from its outset.

God and the world do not have the same perspectives on how to live life. Once we have the right standards, God’s standards, saying, “No,” to ourselves is of paramount importance if we want to put on the image of God and remove the image of this world. The world, combined with our own carnality, keeps pressuring us to conform to its attitudes and ways, and if we are passive, it is easy for us to drift with its way of thinking. We must make choices. Sometimes, they are very difficult because of the sacrifice involved. In them, we will show whether we respect God and His purpose or this world.

The fear of God must become a foundation stone to us, one of the kind of nobility and strength of character Nehemiah possessed. It does not matter whether the issue is losing weight because of gluttony or eliminating debt because of covetousness. The world takes little notice of God until trouble is already upon them. But we must learn to do all things to glorify God, and it takes deeply respecting Him to do this. Honestly, would Jesus allow Himself to drift from His focus on glorifying God to become obese or in debt to the point of bankruptcy? His respect for—fear of—God would not permit Him to do these things.

The Christian has to rip himself from the world’s way of thinking and doing. He must be a nonconformist in this regard. He must always understand that the world, though mentioning God frequently, does not fear Him, as its conduct shows. Romans 3:18 asserts,

“There is no fear of God before their eyes.” A Christian must consciously march to the beat of a different drummer.

Why do we not all conduct our life the way Nehemiah did? Partly because of laziness, to a degree because of cowardice, and sometimes because of ignorance. At times, we are so out of touch with God, we become swept up in sinful activity before we are aware what is going on. Yet, at other times, we fail because of this powerful sheep characteristic to give in to the impulse of the moment because everybody else is doing it. There is no tyranny like the tyranny of the majority. It can be every bit as harsh as the tyranny of a despot. Either can put us into bondage. Unless we are willing to look at things through the eyes of God and stand on our own two feet because we fear Him, we will be just as helplessly enslaved to the opinions of the hour as ever.

It is a historical truism that truth on an issue often lies with the minority. The opinions and ways of the majority are often impulsive, taking the path of least resistance without being concerned about the long-range effects. Those in the minority usually have the advantage of thinking things through because they know their ideas will be unpopular and resisted, and so they prepare themselves better.

God is most concerned about how things end, the conclusion of a matter. He wants us to understand what the fruit of an action will be. Nehemiah was willing to be different, a non-conformist if conforming was wrong. His respect for God and what God thought was greater than his fear of what men would think of him or what he would have to deny himself.

Love, Faith, and the Fear of God

There are direct links between faith, love, and the fear of God. Some commentaries suggest that the Old Testament “fear of God” finds its New Testament equivalent in the expressions “love of Christ” or “love for Christ.” It is not an exact match, but they are not all that far apart.

Notice how *The Amplified Bible* translates II Corinthians 5:14-15:

For the love of Christ controls and urges and impels us, because we are of the opinion and conviction that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, so that all those who live might live no longer to and for themselves, but to and for Him who died and was raised again for their sake.

Paul draws our attention to how this quality con-

trols, urges, and impels. It motivates one to live his life in full regard for Him who died for us and was raised for us.

Consider this example from Colin Powell’s recent book, *My American Journey*: “A sense of shame is not a bad moral compass. I remember how easy it was for my mother to snap me back into line with a simple rebuke: ‘I’m ashamed of you. You embarrassed the family.’ I would have preferred a beating to these words.” Mr. Powell truly loved and respected his mother. He had faith that she was telling him the truth when she admonished him in that manner. He possessed a family fear in that he in no way wanted to disappoint his mother, make her feel shame, or bring disrepute on the family name because of his actions. In this case, he was not terrified but had a healthy respect for all concerned. This is very close to the biblical fear of God.

A husband and wife who truly love each other are fearful of doing anything that will damage the bond of trust and loyalty that binds them in their marriage. They are thus careful in the way they communicate with each other, speak of each other in the presence of others, and conduct themselves whether with or away from them. The pursuit of godly wisdom begins when we realize that, because of God’s calling, our repentance, and the work of Jesus Christ, we have a relationship with God.

Our life accelerates in earnest into a truly serious pursuit of wisdom and the Kingdom of God when we respect God and our relationship with Him to the extent that pleasing and glorifying Him is ever on our mind. We become fearful of offending Him and hurting the relationship. This deep respect in no way paralyzes us but energizes us because the fruit of this pursuit is to come to know Him increasingly better.

It is an awesome thought to know that we possess the power to hurt God. We know this is true because of all the expressions of grief God gives in His Word over the conduct of the Israelites. For instance, notice Matthew 23:37, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” How often have we read of God lamenting over the stiff-necked stubbornness of Israel? It began with their release from bondage in Egypt and continued to their captivity! One does not find God rejoicing over their hardheartedness. He was pained because of their lack of respect.

Our fear of God sometimes begins in great fright of Him coupled with a deep sense of self-preservation. Over time, it develops into a deep and continuing loving respect for Him personally and for the preservation and growth of the relationship. We will eventually come to the place where we fear to disappoint Him,

and this plays a large part in motivating, not only the overall direction of our lives, but also the daily details of life.

Not By Nature

In Psalm 34:11, David makes an interesting statement regarding the fear of God: “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.” We must learn the fear of the Lord; it is not something we have by nature. We find the evidence of this in the conduct of all who have lived since Adam and Eve. Romans 3:18 is just as true now as it always has been. The reason it must be taught becomes obvious once we understand that it arises and grows from one’s relationship with God.

The relationship begins with God’s calling. Before that, we may have sincerely believed that He exists, but we certainly did not know Him. Respect cannot exist between two parties—especially the quality of respect God desires—when they do not even know each other. Knowing *of* someone is far different from knowing him. This is certainly true of God, as the world has been flooded with misinformation about Him. Psalm 34:8 supports this: “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” David exhorts us to experience a relationship with Him, for only then will we know that He is indeed good.

David adds in verses 12-14: “Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.” He urges us to understand that the fear of the Lord grows as the relationship develops. The relationship develops when we follow through in submission to God in conforming to His way of life. As we do this, we begin to get a taste of what it would be like to spend eternity as His companion in marriage.

The desires to please Him, not to disappoint Him, to strive to protect the relationship, grow from abject self-concern to preserve one’s life to reverential awe for His great goodness and zealous desire to preserve and glorify His name within an increasingly intimate relationship. We can see how this would motivate what we do with our life and time. It would drive and guide us in how we did things. If we truly respect someone, we try very hard to give him the best possible quality in all we do for him.

Consider this in light of the dating process and the feelings that bring couples together in marriage. As Christians, we are now in the courtship period preceding marriage to our Savior. Access to and fellowship with Him, coupled with submission within the relationship, feeds a growing respect for Him and His way. By this, we come to know Him, and we are motivated to recip-

rocate His loving respect and to produce growth and the fruit of God’s Spirit.

Fear’s Value

Psalm 25:14 is full of wonderful promise: “The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.” *Secret* is also translated “counsel,” but it is closer in meaning to “confide,” indicating two people pressing or leaning together in quiet conversation, a posture that friends take when they share a confidence between them. It initially suggests intimate friendship, then that God opens His mind to those who fear Him so that He can more carefully instruct them in His way and will.

Psalm 31:19-20 adds promises of comfort and protection in times of trouble:

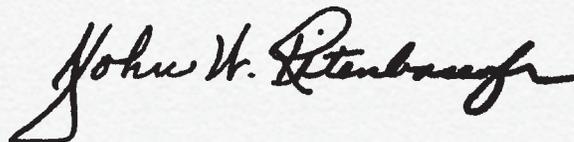
Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You, in the presence of the sons of men! You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the plots of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

These promises to those who fear God are invaluable. In persecution, those who fear Him are aware of His faithful presence. Though He cannot be seen, He is there, watching over His loved ones to spare them being overwhelmed.

David takes His oversight a comforting step farther, “Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine” (Psalm 33:18-19). The eye of the Lord is on all men, but it is directed with special attention toward those who fear Him. The nations of this world have their security in military power. Our security is in God. It is good to reflect on this regarding the Tribulation and Place of Safety because this not only promises His presence but also His deliverance.

Respect is not a trust we give easily and consistently unless we see qualities that are strong, pure, faithful, and serving. God has these qualities and more. He is the quintessence of every good quality, demonstrating them throughout the history of mankind and lovingly revealing them to us personally. He deserves our eager respect. We have everything to gain by giving it because it will greatly aid our progress in preparing for His Kingdom.

In Christian love,



WORLD WATCH

by David C. Grabbe

E U R O P E A N U N I O N

★ According to the London-based *Financial Times*, the “invisible powers” behind the throne of the European Union (EU) are thirty diplomats who shape the majority of EU laws in weekly meetings behind closed doors. These hoary heads do most of the work that really matters in an obscure body called the Committee of Permanent Representatives, or COREPER. Every important piece of legislation has to go through one of COREPER’s two incarnations: the deputies’ body, which deals with the regulatory issues that can transform businesses’ balance sheets, and the ambassadors’ gathering, which focuses on “big picture” issues like foreign policy and general economic affairs. Proposals never become law without the authorization of the members of COREPER.

★ Although extreme-right politician Jean-Marie Le Pen suffered defeat in the recent French presidential elections, his surprising second-place finish in the primary elections marks a change in Europe’s political landscape. Despite the recent landslide defeat, he still earned 20% of the popular vote. This is significant because he based his electoral platform on immigration, crime, and a growing distrust of integration with the EU—themes that embody a growing concern in France, as well as the rest of Europe. These issues cannot be ignored much longer, and if the political left in Europe continues to crumble, the new political leaders and lawmakers will have to address them. As the governments of the EU continue to shift to the right, nationalism will continue to rise and likely impede European integration in the short term.

Catholicism

According to a poll by *The Wall Street Journal*, more Americans have lost confidence in the leadership of the Catholic Church than in any other institution, including the bankrupt energy company Enron. The scandal, which is being called the greatest crisis in the Catholic Church since the Reformation, has become so big that some commentators believe that the world’s biggest, richest national Catholic Church could possibly split from Rome over the issue of priestly celibacy. Father Richard McBrien, a liberal theologian at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, says, “Obligatory priestly celibacy is dead. We’re just waiting for the funeral.”

DISEASE

✕ Chinese health officials estimate that 850,000 of the 1.3 billion people in China have contracted the HIV virus, an increase of more than a quarter of a million (30%) over last year’s figure, and more than double the number in 1999. Although its infection rates are still far lower than in Africa, health experts say China has all the preconditions for a massive AIDS epidemic—a large mobile population, widespread prostitution, and increasing sexual promiscuity among young people.

✕ The Organization of African Unity recently reported that malaria is claiming the life of at least one person in Africa every 30 seconds.

P O R N O G R A P H Y



The Times (London) reports that in the United States alone the pornography industry has an estimated total annual income of \$10–14 billion, making pornography a bigger business than professional football, basketball, and baseball combined. People spend

more money for pornography in America than they do for movie tickets—indeed, more than they do on all the performing arts together. Some 11,000 pornographic videos are produced each year, compared with about 400 Hollywood films. An estimated 30,000 websites offer pornography for monthly

subscriptions, attracting tens of millions of visitors a day. As many as half of the business travelers who check in to hotels offering pornographic films pay to watch those channels. In a clear sign of a declining culture, women now make up between 10–40% of the audience for adult videotapes.

Corell Broderbund, IMSI

BIBLE STUDY: THE PARABLE OF THE LIGHT

In the Parable of the Light recorded in Matthew 5:14-16 (found also in Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16-17; 11:33-36), Jesus Christ uses two figures of speech to express the responsibility of true Christians to influence the world: “a city . . . on a hill” and “a lamp . . . on a lampstand.”

Many Judean cities were founded on the summits or sides of mountains, and travelers could see them from afar. Perhaps Jesus pointed to such a city, telling His disciples that they were like it. The city built on an important location can

be seen by many eyes over a wide area, representing a disciple’s far-ranging and widespread exposure to others.

Jesus’ illustration of a shining lamp illuminating the home suggests a disciple’s more intimate influence. By design, a Christian’s actions cannot be hidden from the eyes of either our families or the world at large. This being the case, he must live a righteous, holy, humble, and pure life, letting his “light so shine before men [and thus] . . . glorify your Father in heaven.”



1. How does “the light of the world” relate to “a city that is set on a hill”? Matthew 5:14; John 11:9; 1:4; 8:12; Revelation 21:23-24.

COMMENT: Light is of a three-fold nature: natural, artificial, and spiritual. The light of the sun is natural; that of a lamp, artificial; that of the Word and its believers, spiritual. The “light of the world” often denotes the sun, which renders objects visible, showing their form, nature, beauty, and sometimes, deformities. The phrase is preeminently applied to Jesus because He is to the moral world what the sun is to the natural world. The apostles, ministers, and all Christians are lights of the world, because they, by their witness, show what God requires, what man’s condition is, and what way leads to the Kingdom of God.

2. Why should light not be hidden? Matthew 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16; 12:35.

COMMENT: “Lamp” (NKJ) or “candle” (KJV) means any portable light, as a lamp, candle, or lantern. Jesus shows the disciples that He had enlightened them so that others might also see the light and benefit from it. When a person lights a lamp, he does not conceal the light but places it where it may be of use. So it is with God’s way of life and those who follow it. God gives His truth to us to benefit others. It should not be concealed but show itself in stark contrast to the wicked world, thereby exposing and instructing it. If a light is concealed, as under a basket, no one benefits from it. However, considerate people place a lamp so that its benefits reach all who are in the house.

3. What should shine in view of others? Matthew 5:16; Proverbs 4:18; Romans 13:11-14; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:8-13; I Thessalonians 5:6-8; I John 2:16-17.

COMMENT: A Christian’s righteous life, pleasant attitude, and good works, including pure conversation and faithful obedience, should not be hidden but be seen and known. We can give no light until we have received the grace of God and the enlightenment that comes through the Holy Spirit. Our lives must produce the fruit of the Spirit, reflecting the shining example of Jesus Christ. Humbly, in all communities, in all business, at home and abroad, in prosperity and adversity, it should be clear that we adhere to God’s way of life. Letting our examples shine requires that we resist the influence of the world. We cannot have a light that shines and at the same time

live as the world does with its lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life.

4. What should be our proper motive for letting our light shine? Matthew 6:1-4; Ephesians 2:10; I Timothy 5:25; Titus 2:1-10.

COMMENT: A Christian should not let his light shine to be praised by others, but to bring glory to the Father. The Pharisees acted to be seen of men, but true Christians behave to glorify God, caring little what people may think of them. It is by our conduct, not our pomp and circumstance, that others may be brought to honor God. We should live so that people may see from our good works the proper nature of God’s way of life. Good works cannot be hidden because they stand in stark contrast to the ways of this wicked world. These works are required behavior at home and in the outside world.

5. How is the Father glorified? John 15:8; I Peter 2:12; 4:11, 14-19.

COMMENT: We glorify the Father by bearing the fruit of the Spirit and doing good works, by correctly praising and honoring Him, and by being led to properly worship Him in obedience. We provide a witness to the world when they see in our lives the excellence of God’s way, and the power and purity of the truth. We learn five principles in this parable:

1. God’s truth cannot be concealed.
2. Where light is not manifest in our lives, we make no witness.
3. Those who profess Christianity yet live like worldly people prove that they are not truly converted.
4. Attempting to hide our Christianity betrays God’s trust, injures the cause of goodness, and renders our lives useless.
5. Good actions will be seen, leading people to honor God.

No sincere and humble Christian lives in vain, for at midnight even the feeblest light is of use.