



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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Issue # 206

Sober-Minded Youth

Young people, you are at a very important time in your life. I believe it is necessary that you think right about youth. Hopefully, as we discuss the Bible, Bible truths, and Bible applications together, we will all be inspired and instructed in God's Word. Sometimes we say that youth are the Church of tomorrow. I do agree with that. Youth definitely are the future of the Church. However, I also like

to think that youth are the Church of today. One of the reasons I believe it is important that youth be active in church today is because your influence and testimony in the Church have a powerful effect on the effectiveness on the present Church, and the present work of God in the congregations which you are a part of.

The reason I say that is because the world, looking on,

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will gauge God's people by the behaviour of the youth in the Church. We say, "Why is that?" Generally, youth are expected to allow some exceptions. They are not really expected to act like mature adults. Yes, there is a maturing process that is taking place but there are principles which young and old alike need to adhere to.

The word "sober minded," is used in Titus 2:6, "Young men likewise exhort to be sober mind-

ed." Before we read this passage, I would like to make a comparison of the testimony of two different young people. I read this testimony somewhere and I am not sure exactly where it was. One Mennonite youth's testimony was that his life was once dry, but now was full of joy and excitement. The basic theme of his testimony was the thrill and wonder of being a Christian. His closing recommendation was "Get in on the fun. There is a big

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pile of blessings Christ wants to pour out on you.” Is that sobriety? Is that sober thinking?

Contrast this with Philegeus who was a youth in the Martyr’s Mirror era — a youth of thirteen years old who was martyred for his faith. He told his persecutors, “I am a Christian, and will remain a Christian and obey only Christ’s commands all of the days of my life.” — A thirteen-year-old. He was a young man who was serious, who was sober minded about his relationship with the Lord. I believe it is not too hard to distinguish the difference. Yes, youth is a time of excitement in many ways. It is a time of joy. However, being a Christian means bearing the cross. Jesus clearly portrayed that in His teaching, over and over again. Cross bearing is not a fun experience to the flesh. Yes, it is a satisfying experience, but it is not fun to the natural man.

Now, let us read Titus 2:1–8. “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young

women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.”

If I were to ask the neighbours, young men, about your behaviour, would they have simply no points against your behaviour — the way you relate to others? The way you drive? The way you portray a non-resistant spirit? Would there be no place which someone who is against you would have nothing to accuse you of? That certainly is the goal. We know that we are human and we do make mistakes at times. Sometimes we do things without thinking that are rather foolish afterwards, but it is the goal with our behaviour, that those who are against us “may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of [us].”

When we think of sober minded youth, what qualities of youth are we talking about? In defining

sober minded Strong's says this of sober, "To be of a sound mind, sane." Or, we could say, "To be able to use your head and think through issues logically, morally, and spiritually according to the Word of God. Webster's has this to say about sober, "straight forward, serious." Another definition is "plain and subdued." This would relate more to the outworking of a sober attitude, but it had this in the dictionary, "plain and subdued — sober attire for church." That is what it said in Webster's dictionary. I thought it was interesting — sober attire for church — plain and subdued. Another definition from Webster's would be "void of frivolity, exaggeration, or speculative imagination."

Young people, and all of us, have imagination and I think it is proper to use that at times, but our imaginations can run away. The dictionary gave the illustration, "He gave a sober assessment of the problem." Sober minded — he was thinking through the issue and was able to apply it to the issue at hand. A sober minded youth thinks right. Sober mindedness starts in the head and he talks right. As he thinks and talks right, he behaves right. It affects his behaviour. We all know that the thought patterns, which we have, have a

direct relationship on how we behave. Therefore, it is important that we think right, so that we behave right. "For as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7)

Young people, we could raise this question, "*Should we really expect you to be sober minded?*" Should we really expect our youth to be serious about life? Why burden our young carefree days with sober, serious thoughts about life? Why not have fun and do what feels good? Are not youth entitled to having a good time, lots of fun, lots of pleasure and enjoyment? Are you? I believe it is like I said before, youth is a time to enjoy life, definitely, but there is a sober and serious side of life which youth must think properly about. We read the accounts in the Martyr's Mirror about young people. These were young people, thirteen, fourteen and fifteen-year-olds who gave up a prospect of life, and enjoying life — who gave their lives for the sake of the Gospel. This is very touching to me.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 tells us this, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these

things God will bring thee into judgment.” Yes, rejoice young man in your youth, be cheerful, let your heart cheer you, but if you “walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes,” and are not sober about the course of the path your feet are taking you, you will have to give an account for those foolish things that you do. Youth will reap what they sow.

Ecclesiastes 12:1, the very next chapter, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” This makes me to think that youth should live their lives in a conscientious manner so that their behaviour in youth will not haunt them in later years. I would say for myself that I am sure I do not know what I am spared from, by being encouraged to live a life in youth that is a blessing to my later years.

We could raise the question, “*Why do we expect youth to be sober minded?*” 1) *God commands it.* I think that is sufficient enough. The apostle Paul was instructing Titus, “Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded,” and young women in Titus 2:4, “Teach the young women to be sober.” We are not discussing

an optional behaviour pattern for youth, but we are discussing a standard feature for spiritual youth. Sober minded is simply that. It is a standard feature for spiritual youth.

Why do we expect youth to be sober minded? 2) *It is a time of moulding character for a lifetime.* Here again, we cannot comprehend the impact that character developed in youth has on a young person’s potential for adulthood. We cannot overestimate that. We can consider simple things like work habits. The work habits that we establish in our youth, will go with us throughout our life. I still consider myself to be young, but I realize that already there are some things about our work habits that if we could have applied ourselves better when we were younger, it certainly would make it easier for us when we are in the heat of later life. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” (Ecclesiastes 9:10) Put your hand to what is before you, and do it with your might.

Youth is a time of moulding character, social behaviour, and interpersonal relationships. It is a time of studying. It is a time of putting into concrete the patterns of your life. It is establishing a pattern for how you relate to oth-

ers and how you relate to your parents, and your brother and sister relationships in your home. It is establishing a pattern for how you relate to church authority, to other young people, and to other spiritual adults.

Another moulding of character is spiritual priorities. Youth is a time of moulding spiritual priorities. The spiritual priorities which you mould in youth will have an influence on you throughout your entire life. I believe it is simply that plain and clear. Young people, what is it on Saturday evenings, perhaps *The Farm Girl*, *The Lancaster Farming*, or the hunting magazine, or whatever magazine it is, came? They are all very interesting, captivating, and informative but you come to church Sunday morning with your Sunday School lesson empty. It is a spiritual priority. What is the matter with our spiritual priority? Those kinds of habits will follow you throughout life. That is why it is very important that young people think about the habits they are forming and use the help of God to guide their habits in a way that is right.

Why do we expect youth to be sober minded? 3) *The choices and decisions of youth affect their personal destiny*. They not only mould your character for

life, but they form your eternal destiny. They affect your personal destiny and influence the destiny of others for eternity. You may say, “Is it really that strong?” Young people, you are setting an example for other young people. You are setting an influence and a pattern. Thus, it tells us in verse 7 of young men, “In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works.” (Titus 2:7) You are setting a pattern for others to follow. The word “pattern,” as it is used there means an, “example or guide.” How is it young men and young women? Is your life such that time after time after time, when the stamp is stamped it is consistent and the same pattern? There is a consistency about your life that will influence others in the right way.

Friends and peers have a powerful testimony to the world, or it is a shameful disgust depending on your character? The choices of youth will influence your future home as God leads. The wife or husband you choose — marriage companions — or the church you associate with, these choices in youth will do that. Youth need to learn sobriety now so that they will be sober adults. Have you ever heard it said, “Well, he never grew up.” Young people, we must learn sobriety so that when it comes to adulthood

we can be prepared to be able to face the challenges of life realistically.

Moving on to the second part of the message, *I would like to think of character traits of sober minded youth.* 1) *One very important character trait is spiritual youth.* Sober minded youth will be spiritual youth. Also, a spiritual mind is necessary to be sober minded. Without a renewed mind, young people are not sober minded. Without the new birth, young people cannot think right about life, the challenges of life, nor the questions of life. Romans 12:2 says, “And be not conformed.” This means do not be patterned after the “world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” “Be not conformed,” — do not pattern your lives after the world. However, if we will not pattern our lives after the world, we will need a renewed mind. The word “renewed,” means, “to renovate.” When we renovate, we put off some things. We strip the building down. There are a lot of things that need to be thrown away. There is also a putting on. We, as young people, need to renovate our lives by the power of God.

As we think about being spiri-

tual youth, I am concerned that our youth know what it means to be a spiritual person. It is more than simply going through the motions. It is more than becoming a church member. It is more than joining the Mennonite Church. Yes, that is all very important, but youth who are spiritual will be youth who are walking with God. These youth will have a consistent, vibrant personal devotional life. They will be youth who love the Word of God.

I would raise a question (for adults and young people), “Do we love the Lord more than anything else?” Is our love for the Lord more than anything else in our life? Or, would we give up our love for the Lord ahead of our job? Ahead of prosperity and money? Ahead of our special friend? Yes, young people did that. Young people have given up their future life because of their commitment to the Lord. What about our car, dream truck, or our earthly ambitions? Do they come ahead of our love for the Lord? We might say, “I do not really love my car.” How do we know? What do we talk about? What is on our mind? What do we think about? Thought patterns — what we think about — really portrays where our affection is set. I challenge myself on

that. It is so easy to get carried away in the things of this world, and not give the attention to the things of the Lord that we need to give.

Young people who are spiritual will not be bashful about discussing the Scriptures. They will not be bashful about encouraging each other in the faith, sharing struggles and leaving a faithful testimony to the ungodly. That is spiritual young people and spiritual godly people.

2) *Another characteristic from Titus 2, about sober minded youth is that they do not form a generation gap between themselves and older mature Christians.* I take this from the teaching that is given in Titus 2. Titus 2:3 calls the aged women to be teachers. “That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.” (verse 4) Sober minded youth will not form a generation gap between themselves and older mature Christians. I would like to raise this challenge also to us who are older, perhaps a generation gap is not always a young people’s problem. Are we as older women and older men, taking the initiative in relating to youth, teaching them by word, and not only by word but by example? I think that is what Titus 2 is teaching

here. The aged teach the young women to be keepers at home, chaste, obedient to their own husbands, by their example, but also by interpersonal relationships and interaction. To have a profitable church life, both young and old need to benefit from each other and young people will recognize that. This means young people that we need to be teachable.

Young people are the kind who think, “Things ought to be done.” I speak for myself. We think we know something, but we can, and must, learn from the wisdom and advise of experience. We know, the sixteen-year-old who thinks he knows how to drive a car but he never did it. He needs to be taught. Or, perhaps the eighteen or twenty-year-old, has some ideas about running the farm. Yes, those are good and can be put to work, but he must also have a teachable attitude. I challenge myself on that. Form a good habit when you are young, so even when you become a little older, you are still able to learn from those who are older and more mature. Perhaps young women, you know how to manage the household. You have your ideas. Those are good and, I believe, they can be put to practice, but learn from your mother, and from older experienced

women.

I would like to draw some lessons from the book of Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) and learn some more from young men who lived in their day. It is a blessing to me that the Scriptures are full of examples which we can study, think about, and apply their experiences to ours. The book of Daniel is rich in that. I think this story in Daniel 1 is very familiar and I will not take time to read it. Daniel and his three friends were carried from their homeland into the foreign country of Babylon. I will read verse 3-5 to help explain the situation, "And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the

end thereof they might stand before the king."

What I gather from the setting here is that the king was endeavouring to retrieve more workers for his kingdom. He spake unto one of the rulers of his kingdom and said go and find certain of the captives of the children of Israel of the king's seed and of the princes. They were take these children and teach them, observe them, train them and feed them a daily provision such that at the end of three years, they would come before the king and the king would be able to take his pick from among them.

I would like to gather some lessons and character traits that sober minded young people will have and will develop. 1) The first I take is from verse 4. One of the requirements of the king for these who were to stand before him was, "Children in whom was no blemish." *I would like to take the character trait of purity and discuss, "children in whom was no blemish."* Young men and women, purity is a product of sober minded thought patterns. Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:28, plainly tells us that immorality begins in the heart or mind prompted by what is observed through the eyes. It is a thought pattern. Purity is a product of sober minded thought

patterns.

Most likely it was like this in all ages, but I believe the increase is rampant today. Youth today are bombarded with impurity in the world. Today young people are not expected to be pure, nor to live holy lives. A Christian young person desires with all his heart above all else to live a sanctified and holy life before God. This goes right along with some things we could discuss in the topic of relativism. Some time back (I was not present) a brother was giving a sermon topic on the role of sin in Boston. There was a group of young people who bonded together and started to chant. Their chant was, "We want sin. We want sin."

We live in a society that wants sin. It is a society where a certain percentage wants to legalize moral perversions and reject the laws of God. This is the society we live in. It is very imperative that Christian youth want holiness to the Lord as the standard for their lives. They, with Joseph in Potiphar's house, band together and cry, "how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9) It is a serious matter. I fear for all us that the open and unashamed practicing of sin has a dulling effect on the mind and the consciences of the people of God.

We tend to lose the exceeding sinfulness of sin because of the rampant and open unashamed practicing of sin. That is a fact.

I think the answer is in Daniel 1:8, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat." Young people, purity is a personal matter and you will need to purpose in your heart personally. No one will do it for you. Your ministers cannot do it for you. Your parents cannot do it for you. Your peers cannot do it for you. You must personally purpose that you will not defile yourself, with the defilements of the world. Daniel purposed in his heart. He considered the issue at stake, then personally determined by God's help not to defile himself with the king's meat.

Now some practical instruction. *How can youth secure their hearts? Maintain strong ties to your home.* Daniel was away from home and he was in the king's court. He was not likely present with his father, or with his parents. He was not under the shelter of a Christian home. Perhaps Daniel would consider, what would his father say about eating the unclean meat and drinking wine? *Appreciate the safeguards of your parents and church leaders.* Young people it

is good and proper that you think through issues. However, sometimes in your limited understanding, you cannot grasp all the implications of the safeguards that your parents, church leaders and the church have established. Appreciate them, and someday you will understand the implications of them. Simply apply yourself to them, and know that they are for your good. Be willing to stand for them. I see also maintaining strong ties to your home. Be willing to stand alone away from home. I think that is part of maintaining the strong ties to your home that you were associated with in your young years.

It is interesting to me in verse 4 that the king was specifically instructing his people to look out for, “such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace” — those who could stand on their own two feet, and stand away from home. How shall the young secure their hearts? Proverbs 4:14, 15 says, “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.” Young men (and all of us) perhaps you will have to make some changes in the way you do things sometimes. You might have to take a different route to work. You might have to

avoid certain stores. It is that simple: “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.”

“Ponder the path of thy feet.” (Proverbs 4:26) Where are your feet taking you? Did you ever do something (and I have done it myself) and afterward you think, “I simply was not thinking. Why did I do that?” Ponder the path of your feet. Where are your feet taking you?

How can young people maintain personal purity? Young people must have personal conviction for purity in courtship. Again, it needs to be personal, not something that is imposed upon you, but you must personally believe that it is imperative to have a pure courtship. Again, these are some things that perhaps you do not totally understand — the hands off policy that we expect of our young people. Maybe you do not understand, but believe it is for your good. Perhaps you wonder why your parents set some “trivial guidelines,” for you. Why there are certain times that you have to leave and come home, and why this and why that and why you cannot be together more. It is for your good. Courtship is a time to discern character and compatibility, but passion will overrule your ability to make sound judgment.

It is that simple.

How do young people maintain personal purity? Be temperate with silly foolish thought. Did you ever hear the statement, "Oh, I was kidding?" That is casual, very casual. The term "kidding," means, "to mock playfully, tease, to deceive in fun or fool," according to the Webster's dictionary. Silliness and foolish talk so quickly lead to impurity. It is that simple. Suggestiveness, excessive boy/girl teasing among upper teenagers, especially when done in group level so quickly moves beyond the place that is morally good and proper. I am not saying there is not a place for two good friends to exchange good-humoured remarks. However, when a band of young people come together and are teasing each other between the boys and the girls, and the thing really starts rolling, it really tends to silliness and improper behaviour.

Proverbs 17:22 tells us, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." I believe that. Some of us have the gift of the merry heart more than others. Some of us are more somber, or more sober. I believe there is a place for both. However, remember this young men and women, an overdose of medicine destroys life rather than nurtures it. A

good thing overdosed will destroy the very thing that is good.

Proverbs again says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23) Purity is an imperative for living a life that is productive and pleasing to God. God will bless your quest for purity. In Daniel 1:9, 12, 15, we know the test that Daniel set up. Daniel endeavoured and thought through this issue. God blessed him with a plan and brought him to favour and love with the prince of the eunuchs. In verse 12 Daniel said, "Prove thy servants," "Let us have a test here. Let us eat pulse ten days and then lest us make a comparison." It was a miracle that Daniel and his three friends appeared healthier in ten days. Pulse normally does not work that fast but it was a miracle that God had worked because of the faith of Daniel and his willingness to stand for his convictions.

2) *Another character trait is that sober minded youth will not compromise their convictions for truth.* We see that very clearly here in Daniel. He was unwilling to compromise. He purposed that he would not defile himself and was unwilling to compromise his convictions for truth.

3) *In chapter 2 sober minded youth seek answers for the*

secrets of life from the God of heaven. Chapter 2 is a very perplexing situation that arose. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream but and he forgot his dream and he wanted his astrologers and sorcerers to tell him his dream that he forgot and tell him the interpretation of it. This was an impossibility outside of God. It was impossible to know what the king was thinking, nor the dream that he dreamed outside of God. The king was unreasonable, became angry and commanded that all the wise men in Babylon be destroyed.

Then, in verse 13, “And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.” Here again, Daniel was sober minded. It was a thinking pattern that was going on in his mind, and he desired time so that he could seek the face of God for this matter along with his three friends. Sober minded youth seek answers for the secrets of life from the God of heaven. There are many things that we do not know about the future. What shall I work? Whom shall I marry? What is my life’s calling? School teaching or missionary or fathering or mothering, what does the Lord have for me? What is the secret from the Lord? We need to seek the Lord to find

that answer. Daniel sought out his friends in this matter and together they sought the face of the Lord, “That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision.” (verse 18, 19) The Secret was revealed. Young people, the secrets of life will be revealed if you seek the face of God. God is in the business of blessing those with answers who seek his face. There are many perplexing situations that arise in life. Sober minded youth (and all of us) will commit the matter to God in prayer and fasting. God reveals Himself to those who are serious about seeking His face.

4) *Sober minded youth give God the glory for success.* In verse 28 we see that while the king was praising Daniel, Daniel was saying there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets. “It is not because of who I am, but it is because of who I serve that this secret was revealed.” Sober minded youth give God the glory for success.

5) *Sober minded youth refuse to worship the king and his idols.* We see this in Daniel 3:15. Recanting is not an option. The

king said, "I will give you another opportunity," but they said, "No king, we will not do it. We will not worship the idol that you have set up. We will not bow down to your gods. We will not do it." Then, the king did not give them a second chance. His anger was so stirred that he stirred up the furnace and threw them in. Recanting was not an option.

Furthermore, I see in this situation that these sober minded youth, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were trusting in the sovereignty of God. They told the king, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." (Daniel 3:16) Why? Because "our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." God is able to do that. We do not know if he will, but He is able. We believe it. Then, they said "[but], he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Yes, we are not sure if God will spare us from a physical death, but we know that God will deliver us out of the hand of the king. I raise the question, "Would we be willing to face the burning fiery furnace for our stand as a conscientious objector to war?" Would we be willing to do that? I believe that the real test, young people, of your personal commitment to the Lord is

your ability, with the strength of the Lord, to stand alone.

We do know that there was positive peer pressure at work and we are very thankful for that, but finally they all had to answer for themselves in this matter. The real test of a person's commitment is their ability to stand alone. I would like to give a suggestive assignment. Young people, in the back of *The Martyr's Mirror* there is a topical index that you can look up. One of the topics that you can look up is youth tested. There is a whole list of pages where young people were tested for their faith. Look up those accounts and read the accounts of young people who stood for their faith, and gave their lives for the Lord in very torturous ways at times. I think that would do you good. It would do us all good.

In closing, sober minded youth exchange fun for fulfillment. They exchange silliness for sobriety. They exchange foolish talk for a circumspect walk. They exchange the pleasure of sin for pleasing the Lord. Young people, if you have a renewed mind, you will be willing to make those renovations to make those exchanges in your lives.

Let us notice now the seriousness of sober minded youth. Revelation 22:10, 11, are very

serious verses. I am always sobered when I read it. “And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Do you know what this tells me young people? What I take from this verse is that if the Lord would come and we would be found unjust, behaving in a filthy way, or thinking an unholy thought, your eternal destiny would be sealed by the state we find ourselves in when the Lord returns. I think that is the sober teaching of this verse. This

is not only for young people, but for all of us. As the proverb says, “the way the tree falls, it will lie.”

Young people, walk circumspectly. Walk as those who are looking as Titus 2:13 says — “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” I raise this challenge: when was the last time in your thinking that you thought about the return of the Lord? For myself I raise that challenge also and for all of us. 1 Peter 4:7 tells us, “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” It is imminent.

Scripture References

Genesis		Daniel		Titus	
39:9	130	1:3–5	129	2:6	122
		1:8	130	2:1–8	123
Proverbs		1:9, 12, 15	132	2:4	125
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From the Previous Issue:

Preventing a Gap Between Teaching and Practice

From a message by Jonathan Rudolph

Sunday, May 07, 2006

Antrim Mennonite Church

Book Reprint (Continued)

One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 24.

The Ten Commandments.

[Exodus 20:1–17]

I. The preface (1, 2).

II. Our duty toward God.

1. The first commandment (3) — God.

NOTE. — The qualities in man which are most active in creating “other gods” are pride, covetousness, sensuality, and superstition.

2. The second commandment (4–6) — Image.

a. The creation of images (4, 5).

b. The worship of images (5, 6).

NOTE. — Christ says, “They that worship the Father, must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Not even the image of God Himself is acceptable in worship. The images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the apostles, used in connection with worship, are clear cases of idolatry.

3. The third commandment (7). — The name of God.

a. How the name of God may be taken in vain.

i. By using profane language.

ii. By using the name of God lightly in conversation.

tion.

iii. By professing Christianity without trying to be

a Christian.

iv. By making promises to God and ignoring them.

b. The penalty (7) (Romans 14:12).

4. The fourth commandment (8–11). — God’s institution.

NOTE. — “And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it” (Genesis 2:3). Let it not be defiled by inconsiderate actions of God’s supposed followers. Following are some of the right and wrong uses to

which the Sabbath may be put:

WRONG.

Creeping unusually late.
“Resting” from spiritual work.
Excessive choring.
Visiting for pastime.
Unholy conversation.
Sunday Excursions.
Reading sensational literature.

RIGHT.

Prayer.
Resting from manual labor
Personal work among the unconverted.
Visiting the sick.
Conversation on spiritual topics.
Work in religious meetings.
Reading religious literature.

III. Our duty toward our fellowman.

1. The fifth commandment (12).
 - a. How children may honor their parents.
 - i. By obeying them.
 - ii. By respecting them.
 - iii. By ministering to their comfort.
 - iv. By seeking their counsel and advice.
 - b. The reward of obedience. — Ephesians 6:1–3.

NOTE. — An estimable woman, after having passed her hundredth mile-post, was asked to what she attributed her long life She replied that it was largely due to the fact that she had always been obedient to her parents.

2. The sixth commandment (13).
 - a. The Christian’s attitude toward his friends. — John 15:13.
 - b. The Christian’s attitude toward his enemies. Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:19, 20.
 - c. The Christian’s attitude toward strangers. — Hebrews 13:2.

NOTE. — The life of man is too sacred for finite beings to destroy.

3. The seventh commandment (14).

NOTE. — This commandment may be violated, (1) by outward act (John 8:3); (2) by inward lust (Matthew 5:28). Both sinful in the sight of God.

4. The eighth commandment (15).

NOTE. — This commandment may be violated, (1) by theft or robbery, (2) by unfair business transactions (3) by refusing to pay honest debts, (4) by wasting lavishly what belongs to God.

5. The ninth commandment (16).

NOTE. — This commandment may be violated, (1) by telling falsehoods, (2) by circulating the falsehoods of others, (3) by deception.

6. The tenth commandment (17).

NOTE. — Covetousness is made manifest, (1) by longing for our neighbour's possessions, (2) by taking advantage of them in shrewd business transactions. One thing we may covet. — 1 Corinthians 12:31.

Read Exodus 19. Then study the ten commandments. You cannot but be convinced that the ceremony attending the revelation of God's will by these commandments was entirely appropriate. No other instrument in writing has ever approached it in simplicity, in exactness, in scope, in power, in purity, in anything. All beings and all things in heaven above and in earth beneath are given their proper places and their relations to each other clearly pointed out and commanded to be sacredly kept. God, as the Author and Ruler of all things, must be recognized as such. Not only must man refrain from God worshiping anything which either God or man has created, but even their images must be kept out of worship. The pure worship of God must not be defiled by image-worship, while His name and His institutions must be held in sacred reverence. Nor does He stop here. While the things of earth are not to be worshipped, they are nevertheless to be held sacredly in their places. The honor of our parents, and the life, chastity, and possessions of our neighbors are to be respected. No code of laws has ever been more exacting. No bill of rights has ever guaranteed a wider range of liberties, or more clearly defined the rights and liberties of man. A perfect harmony from beginning to end. Great is the Lord! Blessed be His holy name!

1. Describe the circumstances under which these commandments were given.

2. How were they written?
3. Name some of the “other gods” which people of today worship.
4. How is obedience to parents conducive to long life?
5. What may we covet?

LESSON 25.

The Levitical Priesthood.

I. Origin. — Exodus 28:1; Numbers 1:47–53.

II. Consecration.

1. Their garments. — Exodus 28; 29:5, 29; Leviticus 8:7, 30.
2. The consecration of Aaron and his sons described. — Exodus 29; Leviticus 8.
3. What this consecration meant for them.
 - a. A thorough cleansing.
 - b. Entire giving over into the service of the Lord.
 - c. Clothing with the holy garments.
4. What consecration means for us.
 - a. A thorough cleansing.
 - b. Entire giving over into the service of the Lord.
 - c. A clothing with the robe of righteousness.

NOTE. — Aaron and his sons were sanctified to the priesthood through the sprinkling of the blood of beasts, and the anointing of the holy oil. We are sanctified to the eternal priesthood of Christ by the shedding of the blood of Christ and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

III. Laws governing them.

1. Washing of hands and feet. — Exodus 30:17–21.
2. Abstinence from strong drink. — Leviticus 10:9; Ezekiel 44:21.
3. Against shaving. — Leviticus 21:5.
4. Cleansing. — Leviticus 22:1–9.
5. Concerning marriage. — Leviticus 21:7, 13–15; Ezekiel 44:22.

IV. Duties.

1. Service at the altar.
 - a. Fire to be kept burning. — Leviticus 6:10–13.

- b. Sprinkling of blood, etc. — Leviticus 1:5, 11; 3:2
 - c. Burning of incense. — Exodus 30:7, 8.
 - 2. To keep up the golden lamp. — Exodus 27:20, 21; Leviticus 24:2.
 - 3. To instruct the people in the law. — Leviticus 10:11; Ezekiel 44:23, 24.
 - 4. To offer sacrifices.
 - a. Morning and evening. — Exodus 29:38–44.
 - b. Yearly. — Leviticus 16:29–34.
 - c. In special offerings. — Leviticus 1–7
 - 5. To administer justice in hard controversies. — Deuteronomy 17:8–12.

NOTE.—These duties do not include the special duties which priests performed during the wilderness wanderings, or the duties afterwards assumed upon battle fields, etc.

V. Income.

- 1. Thirteen cities and their suburbs assigned them at the conquest of Canaan. — Joshua 21:13–19.
- 2. One percent of the produce of the country. — Numbers 18:26–28.
- 3. Special tithes. — Deuteronomy 14:28; 26:12.
- 4. Redemption money. Leviticus 27; Numbers 18:14–19.
- 5. Spoils of war. — Numbers 31:25–47.
- 6. Shewbread and offerings. — Leviticus 2:3; 7:6–10; 10:12, 13; Numbers 18:8–14.

VI. Historical.

- 1. The first consecration. — Exodus 29.
- 2. (1) Work of priests in crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3:14–17), (2) in the siege of Jericho (Joshua 6), etc.
- 3. Eighty-five priests slain by order of Saul. — 1 Samuel 22:17, 18.
- 4. Division of the priesthood into twenty-four “courses.” — 1 Chronicles 24:1–19.
- 5. The return from Babylon. — Ezra 2:36–39.

NOTE. — Besides the four courses of priests who returned from the captivity, there were many so-called priests who had lost their “pedigree.” It is to be feared that there are many supposed members in Christ’s

priesthood today who are similarly situated.

6. Corruption of the priesthood. — Isaiah 56:10–12; Jeremiah 5:31; Zephaniah 3:4.

NOTES. — 1. In the midst of a corrupted priesthood, such priests as Jeremiah and Ezekiel stand out as brilliant stars.

2. The priesthood in the days of Christ seems to be numerous-ly represented, being zealous for the traditions of the elders, but blinded to Gospel truth. It is worthy of note that the sentence of death upon Christ was pronounced by the Jewish high priest.

VII. The new priesthood.

1. A change in the priesthood. — Hebrews 7:12; 8:1–6.

2. Christ the great High Priest. — Hebrews 7; 8:1.

3. Universality of Christ's priesthood. — 1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6.

1. Who was the first high priest?
2. What relation did the high priest sustain toward the other priests?
3. Were all priests prophets?
4. Describe the high priest's attire.
5. Were the priests subject to the same laws that the other people were?

Children's Book Reprint (Continued)

THE FOLLY OF PROCRASTINATION;

OR, THE STORY OF CHARLES AND EDWARD MARTIN.

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THE TEST (continued)

The boy, though conscious of having done right, felt pained by his father's approbation.* He always felt so, when his conduct was contrasted with that of his brother; for he loved him too well to be proud of being considered

his superior. Besides, pride formed no part of Edward Martin's changed character, and when commended for anything he did, he would ask himself, "Who maketh thee to differ?" (1 Corinthians 4:7) He said with tears

* Approval.

in his eyes, "Father, Charles wouldn't willingly displease you; I know he wouldn't. Oh, if he would only *think*, he would be a far better boy than I am, I know he would."

"I am not angry with your brother, child, but you, Edward, must help try to reason him out of his thoughtless, procrastinating habits. I wish him to learn to act on principle, that when I am no longer here to direct him, he may be able rightly to shape his course through life," replied Mr. Martin, kindly.

"But Edward, my son, what do you intend doing with the products of your garden when they ripen?"

"Is there anything that you particularly wish me to do with them, father?"

"Oh no; for I am sure you will not waste them."

"Then, if you have no objection, I'll tell you what I want to do."

"What is it?"

"Did you know that Mr. Charlton is gone to Boston to bring his mother and his two little girls to live with him in the village? He has engaged that pretty house among the poplars, and Mr. Abbott is going to put it in repair for him.

"Well, I've been thinking that as he is not to be back in time to

make a garden. I ought to raise him a few nice vegetables and melons. It is the least token of gratitude I can show him for all his kindness to me."

Mr. Martin was highly delighted with Edward's intention, and bid him go to the garden-house and choose any seeds he wanted.

The beds were raked off smoothly, the seeds sown, and half-past three o'clock saw Edward's day's work completed.

About the same time, his father had finished a field he had been harrowing for corn. It was his usual practice to leave off work at an early hour on Saturday afternoons, in order to allow the family and hired people time to prepare for the Lord's day.

Edward went to the house, not very tired, but rather hungry; having eaten only a piece of pie. Finding no work to be done, he obtained his mother's leave to run across the hill to see old Mr. Moore.

Mr. Moore was a godly old gentleman who owned a little house and lot adjoining Mr. Martin's farm. He lived alone—all his family had been dead for years. His only companions were an old gray cat and a little dog. Though he owned but few of this world's goods, Mr. Moore was enabled, by the kindness of his neighbours and his own occasion-

al exertions, to live quite comfortably. Everyone loved him. And when he could not afford to hire help, one would plough his cornfield; another would get home his winter's wood; and another would cut it and so on. His clothes and other little necessities he contrived to supply by making very pretty willow baskets, for which Mr. Abbott the storekeeper readily allowed him a fair price.

Though the old man was poor and alone, he was very cheerful and happy, for he knew that we are at best but "strangers and pilgrims on the earth;" (Hebrews 11:13) and he looked forward to the time when he should meet his

dear wife and children in that happy land, where parting is unknown. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." (1 Timothy 6:6).

He was very fond of children, and took great delight in instructing them in the ways of heavenly wisdom, and in seeing them kind and affectionate to each other. He would often repeat that beautiful verse of Scripture, "*Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" (Psalm 133:1)

To our young friend, Edward, he was particularly attached, and they passed many a happy hour together.

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