

May 2019

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Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER
THINGS**

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF THERE
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

At My Funeral

Mike Thomas | Kokomo, Indiana, USA

Not that I am advocating for it to happen anytime soon, but there are a few things I want to set straight before my departure occurs. At my funeral...

1. **Tell it like it is.** Don't dance around the facts regarding my character and manner of life. If I died faithful in the Lord, as best as can be determined by men, so be it, emphasize those things and encourage people to do the same. After all, "The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot" (Proverbs 10:7). It might provoke others to do the same. But if I died while in rebellion to God, then tell it like it is! It might discourage others from doing the same. There won't be any way of changing my condition before God so don't even try it (1 John 5:16). But you may change the minds of those present, so please warn them: "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12). Say what those in torments would say if they could return from the dead (Luke 16:27-28).
2. **No instrumental music.** My wife and children know how much I love music of all genres and how I listen to it every day (even as I write this article), with the exception to instrumental religious music. I avoid it because Jesus wants His saints to use their hearts and voices, instead of harps and violins, in praising Him. He specifically said worship is to be done with "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). If He had said to "sing and make melody on a harp," we would have permission to use mechanical instruments in worship. But since He limits song worship to a spiritual instrument, I want to remain within the confines of His will. I realize a funeral is not a church service, nor is listening to music on the radio, but my conscience does not permit me to

make a distinction in the setting—whether publicly or privately. Hence, since I do not sing “Amazing Grace” with the accompaniment of a piano (at any time), please do not encourage people to do so at my funeral. The secular music in the background at a funeral home is one thing, but the ceremony itself should consist of singing spiritual songs.

3. **Preach the gospel.** A funeral is a unique opportunity to emphasize spiritual matters to an audience that is well aware of the brevity of life. It is as Solomon said, “For that is the end of all men; and the living will take it to heart” (Ecclesiastes 7:2). The time is right to tell men of “our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). But don’t leave out the rest of the gospel! Let sinners know how to enter the body of Christ: “Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (verse 38). They must know that the only hope of salvation is in the Lord (Acts 4:12; Galatians 3:26-27).
4. **Go to church.** If there is ever a time for Christians to “seek the Lord and His strength” (Psalm 105:4) it is when in the valley of the shadow of death. It is not the time to miss church services to grieve or to make arrangements. Please don’t do that with my funeral! Keep your faith and devotion to God by continuing to seek Him (Psalm 122:1). It will **dishonor** me to forsake our Lord to tend to my funeral.

So there it is, brethren, should this article be available when my departure occurs. My prayer is that “Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life **or by death**” (Philippians 1:20).

(I add, “same for my funeral,” which is probably a whole lot closer than Mike’s. - KS)

Questions from Nigeria

Questions

1. On the worship day, does preacher has the right to have a grade Bible Study. on Sundays preacher argued that children will only be taught when they are baptized, he quoted (Mathew 28:20).
2. He went as far as to stop the youths that has not baptized to fix public addressing system.(Proverb 22:6) was quoted, he said that this should be done at home not in the church, help to brush grass at church premises
3. The brother teaches that any communion wine, the emblem did not bear fruits of vine should not be used on the lords table. What is your answer towards this, let me know if what I answered are in harmony with your answer. What can we term this brother as, sound or false teacher?.

Answers

1. He takes only part of a passage to twist the truth. The entire context is Matthew 28:18-20, Matthew’s record of the Great Commission, which states the mission of the church of Christ. Verse 19 states, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (**New King James Version**). The **King James Version** translates “make disciples” as “teach.” Thayer’s Greek lexicon defines the word, “to make a disciple... to teach, instruct.” The object of the teaching is “all the nations.” This is absolutely unlimited. The church is not just authorized, it is commanded to teach everyone.
2. Youths who are not Christians should not be called upon to lead in worship or spiritual activities, since this would involve fellowship with those outside Christ (1 John 1:7). However, activities that do not involve fellowship in Christ, such as working on a public address system, need not be limited to Christians. Allowing youths to voluntarily engage in these activities might encourage them to become Christians. I fail to see the relevance of Proverbs 22:6.
3. Yes, communion wine should be the fruit of the vine rather than palm wine (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18). But that label may not be found on the bottle. “Fruit of the vine” includes both nonalcoholic grape juice and alcoholic wine.

Not every error in teaching should lead one to be labeled a “false teacher.” Some disagreements don’t

involve sin or denial of the faith, e.g., “gift of the Holy Spirit”(Acts 2:38). “False teachers” teach “destructive heresies” (2 Peter 2:1). We must be slow to label brethren as false teachers (Titus 3:10-11). Even if we identify one as a “false teacher,” some are to be handled differently than others (Jude 22-23). We don’t treat a man who shows his honesty by willingness to study the same as one who stubbornly opposes the truth (Acts 13:6-11; 18:24-28). But, toward those who stubbornly persist in teaching damnable error or troubling the brethren over their opinions, we must contend earnestly with them (Jude 3), reject them (Titus 3:10), and refuse to share with them in their work (2 John 10-11).

Where Are My Priorities?

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

"It was a 99° September day in San Antonio when a 10-month old baby girl was accidentally locked inside a parked car by her aunt. Frantically the mother and the aunt ran around the auto in near hysteria while a neighbor attempted to unlock the car with a clothes hanger. Soon the infant was turning purple and had foam on her mouth."

"It had become a life-or-death situation when Fred Arriola, a wrecker driver, arrived on the scene. He grabbed a hammer and smalled the back window of the car to ser her free."

"Was he heralded a hero? The lady was mad at me because I broke the window, Arriola reported. I just thought, What's more important - the baby or the window?"

"Most questions of priority are not between something important and something trivial; rather, between the important and the most important" (Taken from Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching).

This story illustrates one who failed miserably to distinguish between what was truly important and something that was relatively immaterial. As Christians, we must make sure that our priorities are in the right order as well. Do we always put the Lord first? Many would place Him first some of the time but not all the time. If we fail to have our spiritual priorities right the results will be disastrous; we will lose our souls.

Notice a few passages in the Bible that teach us about our priorities.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37).

"Then He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.' And another also said, 'Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.' But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God'" (Luke 9:59-62).

"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs'" (John 21:15).

Do we really put the Lord first in our lives? Is He our number one priority? If He is then there will be certain things obvious about the way we live.

Attendance. We will be present at all the assemblies (Hebrews 10:25). Sunday night worship and Wednesday night Bible study are very important to those who really love the Lord. When it is time to assemble, those who value their relationship with God are always going to be there. They will not be

searching for some kind of an excuse to salve their conscience when not there.

Studying. If our priorities are right, we will spend several hours each week meditating upon the word of God (Psalm 1:2). It is not hard to see what we value. Do you spend more time in studying the Bible or watching T.V., etc.? Do you read the paper from cover to cover each day and yet fail to spend an adequate amount of time reading the Scriptures? Answer these questions truthfully and you will see what is really important to you.

Giving. I have heard brethren say that we need to give till it hurts. The Bible teaches no such thing. It does tell us to give as we have prospered, not grudgingly, not of necessity but cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Those under the Law of Moses were commanded to tithe, which means a tenth. If they gave that much back to the Lord do you think we should give less? If our priorities are right giving as we have prospered will be no problem.

Visiting. All of us are busy each day. We get up each morning and head to our jobs and then return in the evening tired from working all day. Mothers are busy with the children and with all the chores from taking care of household affairs, finding themselves exhausted at the end of the day. It is so easy to relax and never call or visit someone who is sick or the weak Christian who has been missing the worship assemblies. Those who are devoted to the cause of Christ will exert the energy and find time to make that call or visit (Matthew 25:31-46).

Where have you placed your priorities? If you have put the Lord first, then notice the promise He has made.

“So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life’” (Mark 10:29-30).

Not Forsaking the Assembling of Ourselves Together

Sunday Ayandare | Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

Hebrews 10:25 states: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is..." It is disconcerting and tragic that in spite of this very clear and unambiguous command from the word of God, many Christians still absent themselves from the assemblies of the saints.

One aspect of the problem is the tendency on the part of some to minimize the importance of attending the services of the local church of which they are members. To this set of people, community meetings (or town meetings), social ceremonies, sporting activities take precedence over services of the church. Specifically, we know the case of a local church that has the practice of closing its doors for mid-week Bible Study so that its members can attend naming ceremony. (Naming ceremony is a big occasion among the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria).

Another aspect of the problem of attendance is the idea of some that apart from Sunday morning services, all other services of the local church are optional. Not too long ago, this writer worshiped with a congregation where it was announced that over 200 were present in the morning of the previous Lord's Day, with 15 in attendance in the evening and 25 for mid-week Bible study. The same scenario could be seen duplicated in many congregations across the land.

Of course it needs to be pointed out that we are not dealing with a situation where one has a legitimate excuse and cannot attend when he really wants to. A good example of such is during illness.

Moreover there are those who take delight in cutting their nose to spite their face. In this category are

some of our women who forsake assembling with the church in order to punish or disgrace their husbands for failing to buy them new clothes after childbirth.

Anyway, Hebrews 10:25 shows it is mandatory for a faithful child of God to attend every service of the local church of which he is a member. Let us attempt an analysis of the passage:

1. "Not forsaking" - a negative command. So we are not dealing with an optional matter. This is something that is mandatory.
2. "The assembling" - The passage does not say "the assembly," but "the assembling." The assembly (*ekklesia*) would be referring to one particular assembly. If that was the case, the protagonists of "only Sunday morning assembly" would have had a point. But now the passage uses "assembling" (Greek - *episnago*). "Assembling" is a verb participle that refers to the act of assembling, hence, it includes all the assemblies of the church.

Now, the New Testament lists several assemblies:

- a. Assembly for worship- Acts 2:42; 20:7.
- b. Assembly for the business of the church-Acts 6:1ff
- c. Assembly for exhortation- Acts 11:22,23; 14:22.
- d. Assembly to receive report from evangelists - Acts 14:25-27.
- e. Assembly to withdraw fellowship from an evil person - 1 Corinthians 5:4,5,13.

Surely the list could be lengthened but this is just to show that several assemblies are mentioned in the New Testament, and all of these are important and mandatory for a Christian in the local church of which he is a member.

3. "Of ourselves together" - Every Christian is supposed to be a member of a local church (Acts 9:26; Ephesians 4:16). Hence we speak of "of ourselves together." Attending programs of other congregations is optional. But in a congregation where one is a member, attending its services is mandatory!

Now, why must we attend every service of the local church?

1. **In order to obey a divine command** (Hebrews 10:25). God seeks true worshipers to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23,24). It is His delight that we give Him glory and praise in the church (Ephesians 3:21; Hebrews 2:12). The Lord is with His people whenever they meet (Matthew 18:20). He commands that the Lord's Supper be taken on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:24-26). But this could only be done when we meet together in the church (1 Corinthians 11:17,18,20,33,34). It is also a divine command that we give in proportion to our prosperity for the greatest Cause on earth on the first day of the week when we come together (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8). So we can see the number of commands that we break whenever we fail to assemble with the brethren. Apart from the Lord's Supper and contribution which are restricted to the first day of the week; singing praises to God, prayer, Bible study and other activities could be scheduled for any day and hour. And whenever we forsake any of these, we disobey a divine command.
2. **In order to grow and be edified.** Writing to the Christians in Rome, Paul said, "For I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established" (Romans 1:11). What if an individual was not there when Paul visited Rome? How would such be established? Surely we need every teaching in Bible class and hearing all the sermons for our spiritual growth. Moreover, we need the fellowship, encouragement and spiritual strength that are derivable from the services of the church in order to grow and develop into a mature Christian (Hebrews 5:12-14).
3. **In order to set good example.** Paul charged Timothy to "be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Apparently, one of the ways we exert good influence and set good examples is by faithfully attending every service of the church.

Against this background, we say it with all due respect: that a brother who habitually forsakes Sunday evening worship and mid-week Bible study for "town meetings," social clubs and sporting activities cannot

be said to be a faithful Christian; not to talk of being considered for eldership!!!

Why Do We Need Church Creeds? (4)

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

Finally, we need to consider God's attitude towards denominations. Do you realize that the Jewish religion had denominations? They all believed in the same God, and sincerely thought their denominations were acceptable to God. There were Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, Herodians, Essenes, etc. There is no passage in the Bible where any Jewish denomination is referred to in a favorable manner.

Time and time again Christ rebuked them. "And Jesus said to them, 'Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees'" (Matthew 16:6). There is a reference to "the sect of the Sadducees" in Acts 15:7. Zealots are mentioned in Matthew 10:4. In countless passages Christ pronounces "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees." Some 18 times the phrase "woe to you" is uttered by Christ in the four gospels.

There is only one designation among the Jews which receives a good mention. As Christ is calling his disciples, he sees Nathaniel sitting under a tree, and speaks to him: "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (John 1:47)

The Jews were Israelites, and that's all God wanted them to be, not Pharisee Israelites, not Sadducee Israelites, not Herodian Israelites, etc. "Israel" the name God gave to Jacob.

"Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed" (Genesis 32:28).

And what does God want us to be? Not ---- Christians, nor ----- Christians, nor ----- Christians. (You can supply the denominational names, as I don't have enough paper or ink to describe the 42,000 different sects that say they are "Christian." Centuries ago, we find a name by which the early disciples were called. Paul and Barnabas spent about a year in Antioch preaching, and notice what is written in Acts 11:26:

"And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

The word "called" in the original New Testament Greek is "crematidzo," and has the implication of a divine calling. "to utter an oracle, i.e., divinely intimate..." (**Hebrew Greek Key Study Bible**, Spiros Zodiates). Then we consider the words of Peter in I Peter 4:16:

"but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God."

Why would we want to suffer wearing the names men and women have chosen? Whether the names were chosen by Joseph Smith, Judge Rutherford, Mary Baker Eddy, Charles Wesley, or whoever, why not just be called by the name God gave, and follow only his creed, the Bible rather than the names and doctrines of men? Do you remember the passage that was cited earlier in this treatise from Matthew 15:9?

"But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men."

What about the designation of the church/kingdom that was established on Pentecost? We can find such terms as "Kingdom of God," "body of Christ," "church of Christ," "bride of Christ," "church of the Lord," "church of God," etc. There is no official name given to the Lord's church, but all the terms used reflect a body of people who have a common relationship in that body or church that was established on Pentecost. But where can we find the thousands upon thousands of names invented by men? Where can I go to learn about the "Nudist Christian Church of the Blessed Virgin Jesus," or "The Church of Body Modification," or "The Methodist Church," or "The Roman Catholic Church?"

If the church belongs to and was established by Christ, why don't we let him claim ownership? Why not refer to it by one of the names given in the New Testament? Among the terms mentioned in the preceding paragraph, I find Paul writing to the church at Rome, and sending greetings from other churches. He writes

“all the churches of Christ salute you” (Romans 16:16). If Christ is the founder and head of the church, why would we want to attach some human invented name to Christ’s body? Why call a church the “Lutheran Church,” when even Luther begged his followers not do call themselves after him? Why call the church “The Church of Body Modification,” when such a name gives no honor to the one who died and poured out his blood in order to bring about the establishment of his body, his church?

Suppose a missionary in a Muslim nation was talking with a person who was interested, who wanted to learn more about the church that was established at Pentecost. What book would the missionary give him? The Baptist Manual, The Methodist Discipline, the Catholic Catechism? Could we not agree that all that would be needed to give the person would be a Bible? Centuries ago, when Joshua was about to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land, he gave the following challenge to the people.

“And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).

We still have the right and power to choose. We can serve in the denominations men have created, or we can serve in the kingdom/church established by Jesus Christ on the Day of Pentecost as described in Acts chapter 2.

Preach The Man, Not The Plan (6)

Tommy J. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

In this series I have been seeking to refute the false concept of many preachers, who tell us to “preach the man, not the plan.” As pointed out previously, those who advocate this false concept recognize there is a broad diversity of doctrinal differences that exist among brethren. Brethren are divided over such false doctrines as premillennialism, instrumental music, divorce/remarriage, sponsoring churches, women preachers/elders, family life centers, recreational activities. Each of the doctrines just named are human doctrines, not scripturally authorized by God, thus contrary to the doctrine of Christ. Even though they are opinions of men and thus unscriptural, “change agent” type preachers say that brethren should not allow these unauthorized doctrines to affect our fellowship with them.

But, in contending that doctrine is not important, these “doctrine is unimportant” preachers accuse preachers like myself of belittling the position of Christ in preaching His gospel and exalting His doctrine above His person. But, Christ is exalted only when one respects Him and His doctrine (teaching). If one carefully reads the New Testament, they will see that those who preached and taught Christ also paid proper respect to His doctrine (teaching). Anyone today who preaches the truth about Jesus, the man, as the Christ sent from God, will also preach the truth about His plan, His teaching, His doctrine (Luke 6:46). You cannot separate Christ from His doctrine. If you preach the man, you must also preach His plan.

Those who advocate and support the idea of “preach the man and not the plan” tell us we should exist as the church of Christ, and not as the “church of doctrine.” To them, the doctrine (teaching) of Christ is really not that important. They see Jesus as a loving, non-controversial person, who embraced everyone who came to Him, regardless of what they believed. So, one doesn’t manifest the spirit of Christ when they refuse to fellowship people who are so sincere in their beliefs, even though they are teaching false doctrine. Instead, you are just a mean-spirited, legalistic, exclusive, “neighborhood bully.”

Let me assure you, Jesus was no wimp, nor was He mean-spirited when He taught people. While it is true He loved everyone, that love didn’t keep Him from teaching the truth to people, even if they didn’t like to hear it. He was the supreme controversialist against those who opposed His teaching (doctrine). His attitude was neither wimpish or mean-spirited when He told people, if you love Me and love God, then you will also love My doctrine. Notice, He never apologized when He rebuked the prominent religious leaders, the Sadducees, Pharisees and scribes, for rejecting His doctrine. When they disagreed with what He

taught, He very bluntly told them, “My doctrine is not Mine, but He who sent Me. If anyone wants to do His will, He shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority” (John 16-17).

He certainly felt His doctrine was very important. Note what He said to the Pharisees who had rejected God’s word and formulated their own human doctrines.

“Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written. ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the traditions of men – the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do,’ And He said to them, ‘All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition” (Mark 7:6-9).

Later, just a couple of days before these same religious leaders condemned Him, and delivered Him to Pilate to be crucified, He called them a bunch of hypocrites, blind guides, fools, people who “say and do not” (Matthew 23).

What was it the new Christians were doing after they obeyed the gospel on the day of Pentecost?

“Then those who gladly received his word (Peter’s - t.t.) were baptized and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:41-42)

“The apostles’ doctrine means they were following the teaching of the apostles. Where did the apostles get their teaching?

After Jesus promised to build His church upon the foundation fact He was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” He told His disciples, “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and what you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and what you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:16, 19). On the Day of Pentecost they were being guided by the Holy Spirit Jesus had promised to send them after He returned to heaven (John 14-16). He also told them, “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me” (Matthew 10:40). So, the apostles’ doctrine was the doctrine that came from heaven, and it was surely of great importance, and was not to be tampered with. We see this exemplified when the high priests and Sadducees tell the apostles,

“Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!” Peter replied, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:28-29).

I think I will go with the inspired apostle and say, yes, the doctrine of Christ is very important.

I believe we can see that preaching the gospel of Christ includes preaching His doctrine. All that Jesus taught, and what the inspired men taught and wrote, is doctrine, but, some doctrine is more weighty (Matthew 23:23-24). I’ll try to explain this in the next issue.

Evidently Paul, an inspired apostle, thought doctrine was important, for he tells the Roman brethren they are to

“note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18).

Note:

“Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:35-36).

In John 10 Jesus teaches us that He is that good shepherd He said the people needed. And those who are His sheep will hear His voice (verse 16.) His voice would be His commands, His teaching. His teaching is His gospel, His doctrine from the Father (John 7:16), His word (John 6:63), His truth (John 8:31-32), His faith (system of doctrine, Jude 3). You can't claim to follow the shepherd, if you don't listen to his teaching. If He is to be my shepherd I will make sure I listen to His teaching.

Regardless of what men say, the doctrine of Christ is important. Read what Paul wrote concerning those who turn to Christ. "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? But, God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" Rom.6:16-18. You obey words (doctrine).

What was the form of doctrine Paul is referring to? That form is found in Romans 6:3-5.

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."

When one obeys the gospel and is baptized, he in a figure dies to sin, is buried in water, and is raised to walk a new life. This is doctrine, and one cannot be saved without it.

Husbands Love Your Wives, Ephesians 5:22-33

Patrick Farish | Wauxahatchie, Texas, USA

"Wives, submit to your own husbands" (Ephesians 5:22) is proof to some women that Paul was (as they suspected all along) a confirmed, chauvinistic, woman-hating old bachelor, picking on women, demanding that they submit to their husbands. Of course, they simply stopped reading a verse or three too soon. The fact is, the Holy Spirit plainly points to the duties, not only of wives but also of husbands. Peter wrote:

"Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).

In Ephesians 5:22-33, Christ and His church illustrate the relationship of husband and wife; as Christ is the head of the church, so the husband is the head of the wife; as the church is subject to Christ, so the wife is subject to her husband. It does not matter that this may be contrary to the wisdom of this day. When the "wisdom of this day" contradicts the wisdom of God, we must remember that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25).

"Wives should submit in everything to their husbands." Some disgraceful demands have been made because of a distorted view of that requirement. Wives have been instructed, by foolish husbands, to show their "submission" by complying with stupid, demeaning requirements. The husband making that demand is not loving his wife as his own body.

The behavior of a husband to his wife is, to repeat for emphasis, governed by this, "husbands should love their wives as their own bodies." Whatever one would not do nor demand of himself, he should not do nor demand of his wife. Paul goes on to say, "He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church" (verses 28-29). The husband, the head of the body, is concerned for his "own flesh", to feed and give comfort.

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:31; compare Genesis 2:24). When a man and a woman marry, in a real sense they leave the families they have been part of, to form their own family. Their love for their father and mother becomes secondary; their allegiance is to the Lord, and to each other. When hard times of whatever sort

occur, they do not go “running to Mamma”, or involve parents in the problem. When these differences crop up, father and mother do not intervene to take one side or the other. The man, and his wife, have left father and mother; and father and mother should acknowledge that transition, and keep hands off.

This does not mean that the newlyweds spurn their parents, or that the parents are so “hands off” that they are indifferent. What it means is that the young couple stand on their own feet, in hard times; and that father and/or mother keep their advice, and assistance, until it is sought.

Paul concludes the teaching in the preceding verses with its emphasis on the marriage relationship by saying, “it refers to Christ and the church.” But, that the teaching on marriage not be blown away by the revelation of “this mystery,” he further says, “However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (verse 33).

The requirements of the relationship between a husband and his wife, while demanding, are not out of reach. In the world we live in, it is essential that the husband, and the wife, love and respect one another, because the majority do not, and their sad example can be contagious to the unwary.

Continual Cleansing

William Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

A discussion of continual cleansing is certainly not a new thing. As with most topics that have been the subject of heated debate, it appears there are misconceptions on both sides of the conversation as to what the other is saying. It's sad that many disputes are the result of too much talking and not enough listening. Let us take a few moments to consider what the Bible says about the doctrine of continual cleansing.

What Is It?

It is fitting to begin with a brief description of what the doctrine of continual cleansing is. It is entirely possible that those who are young in the faith or even those who have been Christians for some time but pay no attention to brotherhood magazines may not recognize the term.

Basically, proponents of continual cleansing believe if a Christian's normal manner of life is to walk in the light, sins committed in ignorance or as some have put it, "slip ups," are not held against him, but he is cleansed of these by the blood of Christ. Inherent in this idea is that these are transgressions of which he is not aware of and has not repented of.

Texts such as Romans 5:1 are put forth as evidence for this doctrine, but the primary text appears to be 1 John 1:7. There, the apostle John wrote:

*But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another,
and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

Brethren who have used 1 John 1:7 to advance the continual cleansing position do not teach Calvinism, as they have been falsely accused of at times. The Calvinist maintains that once a person is saved, they cannot be lost - those who support continual cleansing are not saying this. These brethren do acknowledge that one might turn away from walking in the light, and in so doing, forfeit the hope of salvation.

What's The Problem?

A continuous cleansing interpretation of 1 John 1:7 essentially makes the blood of Christ an automatic soul detergent which is applied to the Christian, removing the stains of sin apart from repentance. Can one be forgiven of sin without repenting first? If yes, where does the Bible reveal this?

John does not say the cleansing takes place apart from repentance. Notice what He wrote just two verses later:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse

us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

When does the blood of Christ cleanse us of sin (unrighteousness)? John does not say it is automatic - we are cleansed of our sins as we confess them to the Lord. The relationship of verse 7 to verse 9 is akin to the relationship of John 3:3 to John 3:5. One text explains the other. How are we born again? We must be born of water and the Spirit. When is the blood of Christ applied to our sins? We are forgiven of our sins when we confess them to the Lord.

The idea that we can be forgiven of sins without repentance cheapens the blood of Christ and minimizes the seriousness of sin.

Living In Fear?

Well, if it is necessary for us to repent of sin in order to be forgiven, it must be that we are doomed to a life of fear as the people of God. How can we know if we have committed a sin and are simply unaware of it? Folks who are living good, godly lives could be condemned to hell because of a single moment of ignorance. Either you must live a life of perfection or you must live a life of fear that you have failed to remember and confess a sin to God.

This is the rhetoric used by some who support the continuous cleansing position. We can't allow such emotional pretense to cause us to disregard a clear necessity of the Bible - repentance. Nor should we allow human reasoning to sway our confidence in the Lord. John does not say we should live in fear, but rather emphasizes that we can know the Lord and know that we have eternal life (1 John 2:3-5; 2:29-3:5; 4:6, 13; 5:13, 18-20). The need to repent of sin to be forgiven doesn't negate the confidence of the faithful before God.

If one is not a Christian it is necessary to be baptized into Christ to be forgiven of past sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). We cannot disregard this and teach men otherwise. Neither can we disregard God's will about the forgiveness of a Christian's sin. I am confident that the Lord desires all people to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). Will He allow a penitent believe who is on his way to be baptized to die before obeying? I doubt it. Equally, shall we not have confidence that the Lord will care for His people and make them aware of sin in their lives (1 John 3:19-21; Galatians 6:1-2; Philippians 3:15; Matthew 18:15-17)? Do we not have enough confidence in God and His word to believe that He will grant us the opportunity to repent if need be?

Titles of Jesus - The Rock

David Cooper | Evening Shade, Arkansas, USA

The Psalmist says in Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone.." Jesus quotes from this passage in Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10, and Luke 20:17. Notice in the title I did not say a rock, because Jesus is "**The Rock**" of our salvation. He is the only rock of our salvation, as Peter so eloquently states in Acts 4:11-12:

*He is the **Stone which was rejected** by you, **the builders**, but **which became the chief corner stone**. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*

Peter had just declared that the lame man had been cured by the power of Jesus of Nazareth. Peter says in Him we can never be confounded or overcome if we trust in the stone. "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded" (1 Peter 2:6). I believe Peter is quoting from Isaiah 28:16. "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed."

Jesus is in fact the chief cornerstone of the temple of God, the Church. In 1 Peter 2:7, Peter calls him just that. "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner." We as Living stones are built upon the

Cornerstone, Jesus. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). Yes we are the temple of God. In speaking of the foundation we build upon (see 1 Corinthians 3:10-11), Paul calls us God's building. "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building"(1 Corinthians 3:9). He states we are his temple in verse 16. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

Jesus is the stone to keep the faithful from being confounded or overcome. "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." But He is a stumbling stone to unbelievers (Romans 9:33). "Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone" (Romans 9:32). In this passage he is speaking directly to the Jews, but its application is universal. "And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Peter 2:8). All who cannot accept his teaching will stumble and fall upon The Rock. Jesus states, "And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust" (Matthew 21:44).

Jesus has been The Stone of God's providence for the faithful, even for Israel in the wilderness.

"Moreover, brothers, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:1-4).

Jesus is The Stone of God that crushed the nations of the world to become a great mountain that filled the earth.

"Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:34-35).

If we desire to be under the protection of The Stone, we must not stumble at his word but abide willingly by it. And we should come, "to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God."

Repent!

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Introduction

"It was the plea of God's prophets who boldly proclaimed the sins of the apostate Israelites. It was spoken by the 'voice of one crying in the wilderness.' It was the message of Jesus from the time he began to preach until he dictated the letters to the churches of Asia to the aged apostle John. It was a part of the news heralded by the first-century ambassadors of Christ. It is still God's command to a modern world of rebels. 'Repent!' The cry of the ages." (Steve Cawthon, "Westvue Messenger")

The truth of these observations should impress vividly upon our minds the extreme importance of repentance. Indeed, the Lord's command toward us is, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). What then, does the New Testament teach about repentance?

What Repentance Is

The New Testament teaches us what repentance is. Many people think sorrow over one's sins is repentance. But, since "godly sorrow produces repentance" (2 Corinthians 7:10), it could not be the same as repentance.

Others think repentance is a change of life, but a changed life is the fruit (results) of repentance. John commanded the Jews, "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8). When they asked how to do this, he instructed them to change their lives for the better.

So the people asked him, saying, 'What shall we do then?' He answered and said to them, 'He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.' Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, 'Teacher, what shall we do?' And he said to them, 'Collect no more than what is appointed for you.' Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, 'And what shall we do?' So he said to them, 'Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages' (Luke 3:10-14).

The term "repent" means "to change one's mind" (W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**. 513). "Repentance," therefore, is a change of mind, a mental about-face, produced by godly sorrow and leading to a changed life.

The Master taught a parable that explained repentance. "But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went" (cf. Matthew 21:28-29, **King James Version**). The **English Standard Version** says, "he changed his mind" in verse twenty-nine. Repentance is a change of mind that leads to obedience.

The Lord declared, "The men of Nineveh ... repented at the preaching of Jonah" (Matthew 12:41). But Jonah 3:10 says, "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way." They had a change of mind that led to a change of life.

Necessity of Repentance

The New Testament also reveals that you need to repent. You should repent because God hates sin.

These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren (Proverbs 6:16-19).

The Lord hates sin so much He gave His only begotten Son to destroy it. "He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

One who walks in "darkness" (sin) has no fellowship with God. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (1 John 1:6).

You should repent because you have sinned, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).

You need to repent because Jesus did "not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32). "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

You must repent because “God ... commands all men everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30) He did so in the Great Commission Jesus gave to His apostles, declaring, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). He also commanded all to repent through the preaching under that commission.

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 2:37-38).

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). “When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life’” (Acts 11:18). “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). Paul “declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance” (Acts 26:20).

How to Repent

Further, the New Testament tells us how to repent. The first step is to realize how good God has been to you. How can you continue to rebel against one Who has blessed you every day far more than you can realize and Who only seeks your own good? Indeed, “the goodness of God leads you to repentance.” (Romans 2:4)

Next, you must realize how severely God will judge and punish those who refuse to repent.

But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness--indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek (Romans 2:5-9).

This should lead you to have godly sorrow for your sins. “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:10). Godly sorrow is neither despair nor just sorrow over being caught, but true regret for wrongs done to a merciful Father.

This will in turn lead you to repent, to change your mind from a determination to follow your own self-will to a determination to do the will of God (Acts 26:20).

Results of Repentance

Finally, the New Testament teaches us the results of repentance. If you truly repent, you will abandon your old life of sin and rebellion against God (Luke 3:8-14). Furthermore, you will turn and obey the commands of Him Whose will you formerly disobeyed. You will “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20).

Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call’ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:38-42).

As the results, the Father will graciously forgive your sins (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19) and grant you spiritual life (Acts 11:18).

Conclusion

The story is told of a murderer who was condemned to die. His brother, a man admired and respected by the governor of the state, sought and won the murderer's pardon. This brother entered the cell of his wicked kinsman and posed one question: "What would you do if you were released?" The brutal reply was, "I would kill the judge who sentenced me and the witness who caused me to be convicted." The saddened brother arose, with the pardon still in his pocket, and left his loved one to die unpardoned. Where there is no repentance, there can be no pardon. I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 23:3, 5). "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Lewdness

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In "educated elite" society, modern times are often called "The Post Christian Era." This means we live in a time when most people no longer have faith in or are guided by the principles of Christianity. I certainly can't argue this assessment.

In fact, the moral climate of today is more like that of the ancient pagan world of the first century than that taught in the New Testament. The apostle Paul described the characteristic lives of Gentiles of his day thus:

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:17-19).

The apostle seems to be describing modern America.

The attitude which characterized pagan Gentiles was "lewdness." They had "given themselves over to" it. This led them "to work all uncleanness with greediness." Let's find out what lewdness is, how it is manifested, and why we must avoid it.

Definition

Lewdness ("lasciviousness" – **King James Version**) primarily means "shamelessness." "The prominent idea is shameless conduct" (Vine. 2:310). Lewd people feel no shame for shameful conduct. Jeremiah accused the Jews of his day:

"Were they ashamed when they had committed abominations? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush" (Jeremiah 6:15; 8:12).

People who don't know how to blush are incapable of feeling shame.

But the word is used in the New Testament to mean "sensuality." It is so translated by the **New American Standard Bible** and so defined by Moulton and Milligan (84). "'Sensual' is used in relation to gratification of the senses, especially sexual gratification" (**Oxford Dictionary**). Thus, "lewdness" is the attitude that seeks sexual gratification in ways God does not approve. It leads to activities that tend to encourage or satisfy sinful sexual pleasures.

Part of Thayer's definition of the Greek term translated "lewdness" in the **New King James Version** is "unbridled lust." As examples of the application, he lists "filthy words, indecent bodily movements," and "unchaste handling of males and females" (79-80). Let's consider each application.

Manifestations

Remember, the basic meaning of “lewdness” is “shamelessness.” Christ advised the Laodiceans to buy from him “white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed” (Revelation 3:18). Of course this is figurative, but the figure is based on the fact that public nakedness is shameful. When Adam and Eve realized that public nudity was wrong, they covered their mid sections with fig leaves (Genesis 3:7). But they were still naked in that they were inadequately covered (Genesis 3:9-11), so God “clothed them” with “tunics of skin” (Genesis 3:21).

People who shamelessly parade in public with inadequate or sexually alluring clothing practice lewdness. Obviously, many modern skirts are far too short, but many modern blouses are also too low. When women wear form-fitting or “see through” clothing, or show their bare mid-section, or men go shirtless in public, they are putting a stumbling block to lust before others. Jesus warned:

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!” (Matthew 18:6-7)

Godly women dress in a manner befitting their character (1 Timothy 2:9-10). Those who dress to be sexually alluring are wearing “the attire of a harlot” (Proverbs 7:10). Their dress is lewd.

Lewdness is “unbridled lust.” How could one better describe the sexually explicit content of popular magazines, TV shows, and movies? The Master warned:

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28).

Lewdness is manifested by “filthy words.” The use of “four letter” words is the norm in our society. The crudest of words embarrasses neither the speaker nor the hearer. It’s difficult to watch a movie or TV show not defiled with such verbal sewage. In contrast, Paul commands, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29). Again, he commands, “Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving” (Ephesians 5:4, **English Standard Version**). Christ warns, “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36).

“Indecent bodily movements” are lewd. Could one find a more apt description of modern dancing? John the Baptist literally lost his head because Herod morally lost his head at the sight of Salome’s sensuous dance (Matthew 14:6-11). Many will lose their souls because of such lewdness.

“Unchaste handling of males and females” is a form of “lewdness.” “Unchaste” means “impure.” This is the kind of touch that leads to sexual arousal. Of course, this also describes modern “close dancing” as well as “making out.” “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).

Why Avoid Lewdness

Lewdness is a primary characteristic of worldly living that most Christians once practiced but must shun now that we are disciples of Christ (Ephesians 4:17-24; 1 Peter 4:1-5). This vice demonstrates an impure heart and is spiritually defiling (Mark 7:21-23). It is a work of the flesh, and those who practice it “will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21; cf Jude 4).

Conclusion

Lewdness is a cancer that has eaten away the moral fiber of our society and has insidiously invaded the church of God, robbing us of spiritual strength. We can give up the fight and die with the world, or we can turn to the Great Physician for the cure – repentance from evil works. “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners

and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

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