

Expository Files

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Front Page 13.9 *Learning Under Pressure*

Warren E. Berkley

Some things we learn under pressure.

When I first started using a computer, I was under pressure to learn how to use it. Previous to the purchase I had no training. I just had to put in the time to learn how to use it. Mostly through trial and error I submitting myself to a crash course in how to use the computer (and I'm still learning). That's learning under pressure.

Involved in gospel preaching for about 37 years, on many occasions I've been asked a question about the Bible for which I had no answer. Sometimes in Bible classes or home studies, questions come up and I am compelled to say, "I don't know." Or, as a preacher I may be challenged by someone regarding what I believe and teach; that challenge may send me into hours of study and research. I am learning under pressure.

I must admit, I've learned many things under pressure. Things I needed to know. **Yet I'm not convinced this is the best learning circumstance.** First, when you are under the pressure of the moment, you may be in a hurry to find an answer. You may be tempted to not take the time that good study requires. Crucial mistakes can be made in hasty study. Second, especially when you are directly challenged, you assume a defensive mode and may be more concerned about defending yourself (or group) than discovering the truth. Of course, there will always be occasions of pressure when we must study our way through to respond or answer. We cannot somehow do away with learning under pressure.

What is better is, to be so involved in increasing your Bible knowledge (on an ongoing basis), you will have answers well in mind before the questions arise. There isn't, let us grant, some course of Bible reading and study that will perfectly equip us to perfectly respond to all questions in the future. From the time of our baptism until our death, we will be learning.

If our knowledge is acquired mostly through the challenges and pressures which are unanticipated, our knowledge will probably suffer from an absence of balance; a dangerous limitation. The ideal I want to recommend is, **to read and study the Bible daily, to gradually acquire a well-rounded knowledge of Scripture.** The better our devotion to this ideal, the better prepared we will be for life and the challenges and questions people may submit to us. Learning under pressure should be secondary to our ongoing, personal involvement in learning the truth of God's Word. I need to learn to yield to the Lord, resist the devil and respect the truth before the temptations and questions arrive in my life.

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” (Col. 1:9).

What Does The Holy Spirit Cause?

1 Cor. 12:1-7

Warren E. Berkley

It is typical of the current religious scene for claims to be made of the Holy Spirit's leading, often accompanied by physical movement and vocal expression. Religious television repeatedly broadcast the stage/audience scene where some speaker, singer or leader has prompted the people to jump, to move, to shout and cry. The claim is, this was caused by the Holy Spirit. I believe great light is shed on these claims of men at 1 Cor. 12:1-7.

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. There are diversities of gifts, but the same

Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.” 1 Cor. 12:1-7.

What are “spiritual gifts?” A *gift* is something you receive because of the generosity of another (in contrast to wages or pay); in this case, God is the Giver through the Holy Spirit. “*Spiritual*” is in contrast to ordinary gifts. So **spiritual gifts are special powers and abilities God gave to certain Christians, in that age while the apostles were spreading the gospel (see Acts 8:14-25; 2 Tim. 1:6).** Such gifts were not essential conditions of one’s salvation (like baptism). They were imparted to certain Christians after baptism for the good of all (Acts 8:18, 1 Cor. 12:7). During the time of the apostles, these gifts served the needs of Christians during the time before the New Testament documents were complete and in circulation (1 Cor. 13:8). Paul did not want the members of the church at Corinth to be ignorant about the use of these gifts.

Do people today have these gifts? If they did, there wouldn’t be any need to debate the subject. The spiritual gifts would be manifest in ways that would establish their extraordinary nature. Consider speaking in tongues as one example. If somebody suddenly began to speak in a language they had never learned, that would settle the matter. So, the absence of evidence goes to the conclusion that the spiritual gifts of 1 Cor. 12 are not present today. In addition, consider that these gifts were transmitted through the hands of the apostles (see Acts 8:18). There are no apostles today, thus no gifts. Yet, we are not left with any avoid, since we have the completed final word of God, “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints,” (Jude 3).

What behavior can never be attributed to the Holy Spirit? Here’s the deal in 1 Cor. 12. In classic Gentile idolatry, claims were made about extraordinary behavior, as prompted or led by many different gods. In the pagan worship of that time, in their festivals and assemblies – someone would perform in some unusual or entertaining way and their behavior might be associated with one god or another. It was the Gentile, pagan, idolatrous belief, that strange or extraordinary behavior was caused by the many gods they were attempted to appease. **In 1 Cor. 12, Paul is teaching – the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not like that!** *First, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are caused by one source, Deity: “There are diversities of workings, but the*

same God.” Second, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for the profit of all: “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.”

Once you discover what Paul is doing in 1 Cor. 12:1-7, that discovery puts you in position to better understand the entire section (chapters 12-14), and also puts into perspective the claims of modern Charismatics.

If you could book a trip in a time capsule and go back and look into the festivals and gatherings of the pagans, you would observe very bizarre, extraordinary behavior. You would see people cutting themselves (1 Kngs. 18:28). You would witness dancing and hear strange noises from people falling on the ground in a frenzy. *It might be somewhat entertaining, but would supply no edification nor produce any reverence for God!*

When you see people today falling on the floor, claiming to be slain in the Spirit, stop and read 1 Cor. 12:1-7. When you are responding to people who place spiritual significance on such behavior and claim the Spirit’s presence, read this passage to them and study it with them. There is nothing in that kind of behavior that commends us to God or that provides any instruction about doing His will! Paul in contrasting the pagan variety of “leading” with the objective, sensible, advantageous work of the Holy Spirit.

These gifts were distributed by the Holy Spirit to certain Christians in the apostolic age, “to profit withal,” (verse 7). They were not for the selfish use of the individual, not to achieve an emotional high, and not to yield some bizarre dancing and screaming. Confirmation and edification were the purposes.

Keeping What Is Holy, Holy

Leviticus 10

Stuart N. Tullis

Is God just? Does He randomly dole out punishment and reward on a whim? Why does it sometimes seem to us that He reacts rather severely towards some, while overlooking the faults of others?

To many, the names Nadab and Abihu are synonymous with taking liberty in worship – the presumption that one can approach God in whatever means he chooses and still please God. Though some have struggled to circumvent this principle by suggesting drunkenness was the basis of their

sin (Leviticus 10:9), or that they died because they had entered the holiest place behind the veil, being “before the Lord” (Leviticus 10:1-2), yet the Bible always associates the death of these two priests with their offering “unauthorized fire” (Numbers 3:4; 26:61). Certainly these brothers stand as an example to all who doubt the necessity of having authority for what we do in worship to God. Yet few realize that not only had Nadab and Abihu failed to keep the Lord’s ordinance, but their brothers and father did as well. In the very same chapter which introduces the sin and punishment of Nadab and Abihu we also find Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar refusing to eat the sin offering as the Lord commanded – yet they did so without repercussion from God.

So the question remains: Is God just when He punishes some for disobedience, yet allows others to escape His wrath? The key to this seeming contradiction in God’s judgment is seen in the center of the chapter:

“You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses.”
(Leviticus 10:10-11)

Leviticus 10

Keeping What Is Holy, Holy

The overriding theme of this chapter, as well as the major thrust of the book of Leviticus, has to do with keeping that which is holy separate from that which is common. Nadab and Abihu sinned in their failure to distinguish between what was holy and what was profane...

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has said, 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace.
(Leviticus 10:1-3)

The priest-brothers were engaging in activities suitable for priests. The offering of incense was restricted to the Levitical priesthood, namely Aaron and his sons (Numbers 16). They were the right people, doing the right thing. But something about their offering was amiss. The inspired writer says they offered “unauthorized fire”. Some translations call it “strange fire”. The text reveals that the fire was not what God had commanded. Bible class teachers and preachers have sometimes stated that the fire they put in their censers was not from the altar, and therefore “strange” (Leviticus 6:9). Yet it could be that it was the incense that they set on fire that was amiss and unauthorized (Exodus 30:9). The Lord had been very specific regarding the recipe for acceptable incense:

The LORD said to Moses, "Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part), and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy. You shall beat some of it very small, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you. It shall be most holy for you. And the incense that you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves. It shall be for you holy to the LORD. Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from his people."
(Exodus 30:34-38)

Just as it would be wrong for the people to make incense for themselves according to the formula for this holy fragrance, it would be wrong to take a common perfume and offer it as incense before the Lord.

The fact of the matter remains. These priests had attempted to offer to God that which was unauthorized, unholy. Nadab and Abihu were guilty of failure to sanctify God by rendering to Him what was holy. They had glorified themselves by approaching God by their own design rather than by the Lord’s ordinance. Therefore the Lord punished them as an example to all.

Furthermore, as the chapter progresses, Moses forbade Aaron and his living sons from defiling themselves for the dead. They had been made holy with the anointing oil of the priesthood and had duties to perform as priests (Exodus 30:30). Moses called Levites (who were not anointed priests) to dispose of the bodies.

And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, "Come near; carry your brothers away from the front of the sanctuary and out of the camp." So they came near and carried them in their coats out of the camp, as Moses had said. And Moses said to Aaron and to Eleazar and Ithamar his sons, "Do not let the hair of your heads hang loose, and do not tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the congregation; but let your brothers, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning that the LORD has kindled. And do not go outside the entrance of the tent of meeting, lest you die, for the anointing oil of the LORD is upon you." And they did according to the word of Moses.
(Leviticus 10:4-7)

Evidently, Nadab and Abihu had died in front of the sanctuary, where these non-priests could retrieve the bodies. Had they entered the holiest place, as some have conjectured, their bodies would have been behind the veil, beyond which only the high priest had authority to enter. It was forbidden for Aaron, the high priest, to defile himself for a dead body (Leviticus 21:10-12), and while other priests could ordinarily make himself unclean in mourning for the dead of his closest relatives (Leviticus 21:1-6), Moses did not allow it at this time. They had been anointed as holy to the Lord, and were not permitted to act commonly. Having just witnessed the consequences of disobedience in this regard, the priests obeyed.

God spoke to Aaron, admonishing him to take his position seriously, for the priests had been given charge to distinguish between the holy and the common, and to teach such distinction to all Israel:

And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, "Drink no wine or strong drink, you or your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses."
(Leviticus 10:8-11)

Rather than this injunction suggesting that Aaron's disobedient sons were drunken delinquents, it offered application to the priests who remained: "Let nothing cloud your mind so that you fail to distinguish between what is holy and what is common." The essence of Nadab's and Abihu's sin was a failure to make this distinction. Therefore, this prohibition against drinking wine was not a reaction to their drunkenness, but to their poor judgment. As has been demonstrated and documented throughout the course of history, consuming alcohol impairs judgment and breaks down inhibitions. God's priests are to be of sober mind and sound judgment. The Lord aptly warned Aaron to judge rightly.

Though the day was darkened by the events which had transpired, Aaron and his sons still had their priestly obligations to perform. Moses reminded them of this...

Moses spoke to Aaron and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his surviving sons: "Take the grain offering that is left of the LORD's food offerings, and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy. You shall eat it in a holy place, because it is your due and your sons' due, from the LORD's food offerings, for so I am commanded. But the breast that is waved and the thigh that is contributed you shall eat in a clean place, you and your sons and your daughters with you, for they are given as your due and your sons' due from the sacrifices of the peace offerings of the people of Israel. The thigh that is contributed and the breast that is waved they shall bring with the food offerings of the fat pieces to wave for a wave offering before the LORD, and it shall be yours and your sons' with you as a due forever, as the LORD has commanded."

(Leviticus 10:12-15)

Part of God's provision for the priests was in the sacrifices which were offered by the people of Israel. The grain offering was to be eaten in a holy place (Leviticus 2:3, 10; 6:16). Wave and heave offerings were for the priest and his family (Numbers 18:17-19). Only those who were set apart for this service were to partake of this holy food. Only the holy could partake of the holy.

But Moses' anger was stirred when he discovered that Aaron and his sons had not partaken of the sacrifices which had been offered...

Now Moses diligently inquired about the goat of the sin offering, and behold, it was burned up! And he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the surviving sons of Aaron, saying, "Why have you not eaten the sin offering in the place of the sanctuary, since it is a thing most holy and has been given to you that you may bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD? Behold, its blood was not brought into the inner part of the sanctuary. You certainly ought to have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded." And Aaron said to Moses, "Behold, today they have offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, and yet such things as these have happened to me! If I had eaten the sin offering today, would the LORD have approved?" And when Moses heard that, he approved.

(Leviticus 10:16-20)

Though it was part of the priest's duty to make sacrifices for the people and to eat of them himself, Aaron and his sons had refused from partaking of this holy food, though it was appointed for them to do so. Why did God not strike them down as He had Nadab and Abihu?

The answer, I believe, lies in Aaron's defense before his brother. Considering the events of the day, had the priests eaten of the sacrifices, they would have done so with an improper attitude, and worshiped in vain. The New Covenant Scriptures shed some light on this principle:

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

(1 Corinthians 11:26-29)

In eating of the sacrifices offered to God, priests proclaim God's holiness, since they alone can eat of this sanctified meat. However, due to the circumstances surrounding this appropriated meal, they could not do so in the proper mindset. Eating of the sacrifice without discerning its meaning would have brought judgment on the surviving priests rather than justification.

Moses understood and approved of his brother's decision. We can understand why God punished Nadab and Abihu while excusing Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar. They would have been guilty had they gone ahead and partaken of the sacrifice in an unworthy manner. Therefore it was right for them to abstain.

Let Us Keep What Is Holy, Holy

We, too, may find ourselves in similar situations at times. Perhaps we will be tempted to worship God according to our design and innovation rather than according to His authority. Many have done so, adding mechanical instruments of music to the simple command to sing praises to God, altering the day, manner, or elements of the Lord's Supper, engaging in the appearance of idolatry with icons, beads, and special vestments. From Nadab and Abihu we must learn to approach God only as He has ordained – for He is holy.

Yet, though we may not change the outward nature of our worship to God, we may fail to inwardly regard the significance of our actions. When we fail to focus on prayer when led by a brother in the assembly, does the Lord approve? When we fail to consider the words of the songs we sing to God and each other, does the Lord approve? When we give grudgingly or out of a sense of obligation and duty, does the Lord approve? When we fail to remember Christ's death or discern the Lord's body, does the Lord approve? We may sometimes be guilty of placing more emphasis on the action than the attitude. While many of us would (like Moses) ask why one failed to carry out God's command if we observed some not singing, not praying, not giving, or (more likely) not participating in the Lord's Supper, we would do well to look within ourselves and make sure we are doing these things with a clear conscience and worshipful spirit.

We must, as Aaron and his sons realized, distinguish between the holy and the common, both in manner and method, in attitude and action, in spirit and in truth.

[--Stuart N. Tullis](#)

***An Inspired Song About God's Love for His People
Song of Solomon
By Jon W. Quinn***

A wedding day is meant to be a wonderful time of great joy. The Bible portrays the gathering of the Lord's people unto the Lord on that final day as eternity begins as a bride joining her betrothed on their wedding day (Revelation 19:7-9; 21:1-4; 9-10). The groom is the Lord Jesus; the bride is His people. His best man was John the Baptist (John 3:28-29). The New Testament in several places makes an analogy between the love of a couple - man and woman, husband and wife; groom and bride - with the love of Jesus for His Church (Ephesians 5:25-33). More generally, the love of God for all His people is also pictured this way in the Old Testament (Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:19-20).

God's Love Has Always Been Something to Sing About

Both the teachings of the Old Testament and the New Testament include parables, allegories and figures of speech to describe God's relationship with His people. One example of this is one of the 1005 songs that Solomon wrote (1 Kings 4:32). The Lord has preserved one of these songs for us, evidently because of its special importance. In fact, it begins with the phrase, "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's". What is this "song of songs" about, and what does it have to do with God's love for His people?

Both Jews and Early Christians saw the Song of Solomon as allegorical. Ancient Jewish commentaries speak of the "Song" as an allegory of the love between God and His people. Jeremiah, Isaiah and Hosea all appeal to the people to be faithful to God on the basis that a spiritual marriage contract existed between God and Israel.

Early Christians also looked at the book the same way, emphasizing the relationship between Christ and His people, the church. This interpretation was in line with what Paul and John wrote and Jesus Himself taught.

The Story Summary

1. A humble family of shepherds including a daughter who is the focus of the Song.
2. The young maiden and a young shepherd fall in love. They become devoted to one another and seem to vow themselves to one another. However, the brothers do not look favorably on the developing relationship.
3. One day the king of the land (Solomon?) and his retinue pass by and see the maiden. He is taken with her beauty and he decides she ought to become one of his wives. She is taken to Jerusalem and put in care of the women amidst the luxury, comforts and grandeur of the palace.
4. She is enticed with gifts of jewelry and advancement in the court if she will become another of the king's wives. But she is loyal to her shepherd whom she loves. Her thoughts constantly dwell on her "beloved" and her heart belongs only to him.
5. The king comes to realize that her heart belongs to another and will not be swayed. He is impressed with her virtue and dignity and grants her permission to return to her home.
6. She joyfully sends word to her "beloved" to come and escort her home, and he eagerly responds. There is dialogue between the two as they return home as they express their joy and love for one another, and look forward to their marriage.

Some Parallels Between the Song of Songs and the Love Between Jesus & His Church

The story is somewhat difficult to follow due to the unannounced changing of speakers and locales (hearing it read or sung by different speakers as originally done would have been helpful). Note some wonderful points of comparison between the Song of Songs and Jesus and His Church. The

Shepherd/Groom is a figure of Jesus; The Shulamite Maiden is a figure of the church. The relationship is tender and loyal between the two, and survives the obstacles to it from several sources, including the maiden's brothers as well as the king.

The Maiden In The King's Palace

Available to the maiden while at the palace are all sorts of comforts and luxuries far beyond her wildest imaginations, but she cannot be distracted by them from her first love, the shepherd. She is surrounded by luxury and costly perfumes, but she desires the fragrance of her Shepherd's name (SOS 1:3; Matthew 6:33; 19-21; 24; John 6:27). She asks to be "drawn" after the Shepherd that they may be together (SOS 1:4; John 12:32; Hebrews 4:16; James 4:8). Even the other maidens of the court recognize her deep devotion to her shepherd. They consider her love for the shepherd as evidence of his fine qualities, but will prove to be resentful of the maiden (SOS 1:4b; Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12). She had been tested by suffering hardships and yet possesses beauty and is unashamed. Her toil "on the farm" had built endurance and character. (SOS 1:5-7; 1 Peter 1:6,7; James 1:2-4; Matthew).

But the king is very persistent and tries to win over the maiden and cause her to forget the shepherd. Still, her love endures. The ladies of the court ask where her shepherd is? Has she been abandoned? Has he forgotten her? How often does the world suggest that God has forsaken us? (SOS 6:1; 2 Corinthians 4:7-10; 2 Timothy 4:16-18).

The maiden's answer is that her shepherd is far away, but he has not forsaken nor forgotten her. That is her confidence and a source of her strength. He is preparing a home for them both (SOS 6:2,3; Hebrews 13:5,6; John 14:1-3).

After some final attempts to seduce the maiden, the king permits a message be sent to the Shepherd to come and take her home. She recalls the open country and longs to return there and make a home with her special one (SOS 7:11; Hebrews 11:10,16; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).

The Journey Home

The shepherd comes to the palace and the two return to the countryside together. As they near home, villagers see them coming (SOS 8:5a). Perhaps this is a figure of the angels of heaven so intently interested in our Shepherd and His Bride, the church. The Shepherd reminds her of a previous time in the yard of the cottage where she had been born and raised (SOS 8:5b). The maiden affirms her loyalty and love for the shepherd, and asks for the same in return. Nothing had been able to quench her love for him. Nor can anything quench his love for her. She asks for a seal, or pledge of His love. We, as the church, have it (SOS 8:6-7; John 15:13; Ephesians 1:13,14).

Perhaps the stage we are at right now is in the king's palace, being enticed by the world to leave our first love (like Ephesus did - Revelation 2:4-5). There have been and will be obstacles and distractions. Will our love for the Lord be proven true? Especially in times of distress, the early church had a saying. It is similar to the way the Song of Songs closes (The bride says: "Hurry, my beloved" (SOS 8:14a;) "Amen! Come Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

Wrath of God
Rom. 1:18-19
By Carey Dillinger

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. (Rom. 1:18,19 - NKJV)

“Wrath [is] the personal manifestation of God’s holy, moral character in judgment against sin. Wrath is neither an impersonal process nor is it irrational and fitful like anger. It is in no way vindictive or malicious. It is holy indignation – God’s anger directed against sin.” (Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 1986 ed., p.1108.)

Wrath (or anger) ascribed to man can be dangerous when it has no cause, is taken to excess, or held for an extended period of time (Mt. 5:22; Col. 3:8; Eph. 4:26). But when wrath is ascribed to God it is sinless and a true example of righteous indignation. The Psalmist has this to say, “God judges the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.” (Ps.7:11 - MKJV)

Towards What Has God Directed His Wrath?

According to our text God's wrath is against two things: all ungodliness of men and all unrighteousness of men. Ungodliness represents sins directed against God (failure in one's duties toward God), while unrighteousness represents sins directed against God's precepts (failure in one's duties towards ourselves and our fellow man). Taken together these terms express God's anger towards those that practice the entire catalogue of sin.

Towards Whom Has God Directed His Wrath?

In the context at hand God has directed His wrath towards "...men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." These men were the Gentiles who had in times past received God's will via direct revelation, angels, or inspired men, but since those times had through their traditions (or pure ignorance) watered down the truth (or ignored) until it was unrecognizable in their lives. So these unrighteous men were "holding down the truth" either purposefully or through their own ignorance.

A claim of ignorance would be no excuse "because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them." Paul will use the remainder of Romans chapter 1 to prove these facts.

What Specific Sins Had Been Committed?

Romans 1:22-25 shows that the Gentiles had become idolaters and had practiced all the lusts of the flesh that attend such worship. This was their ungodliness. Romans 1:26-32 shows that the Gentiles, because of their ungodliness, began to practice unrighteousness as they sinned with and against one another.

Note the list contains sins such as: idolatry; disrespect of one's own body, which includes but is not limited to: lesbianism and homosexuality (sodomy); those filled with injustice, a greedy desire, ill will, a vicious disposition, discontent at another's good fortune, intent to commit murder, a quarrelsome attitude, treachery; attributing the worst motives to the actions of others; those practicing cowardly or open slander, gross disrespect, empty pretensions, a mind to disobey their parents, purposeful ignorance; covenant breakers; and the unmerciful. (See also Col. 3:5-7.)

Verse 32 tells us that not only are the perpetrators of these sins guilty, but also those that would approve of their practice.

How Could These Sinners Avoid God's Wrath?

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” (Rom. 1:16-17 - NKJV)

Paul has already explained how salvation is obtained – through the Gospel. “The Gospel is God’s power for salvation to those who believe it, for a way for sinners to become righteous is revealed in it, as an inducement for men to believe it so as to escape the penalty of a violated law.” (R.L. Whiteside, Commentary on Romans, p. 22)

What About Today?

Would practitioners of the things in Paul’s list be guilty of sin today? Would they be in danger of the wrath of God?

In the minds of the world today, Paul has concocted a disjointed list of behaviors ranging from outright wrongdoing (murder) to some things that are probably wrong (contract breaking, slander) to activities that are nobody’s business except the consenting adults who are practicing it (homosexuality). These are the very empty words that Paul told the Ephesians that would come from the disobedient (Eph. 5:6).

Unfortunately for the world they are not in tune with God. Just as the world of Paul’s time had disregarded God and His laws concerning these matters, our world has done the same. What our world (along with the world of the first century) does not understand is that God’s wrath is a demonstration of His love.

“God’s wrath is a demonstration of His holy love. If God is not a God of wrath, His love is no more than frail, worthless sentimentality; the concept of mercy is meaningless; and the Cross was a cruel and unnecessary experience for his Son.” (Nelson, *ibid*, p.1108.)

Rom. 3:23: “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,...”

Rom. 5:12: ...death spread to all men, because all sinned...”

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Topic Page:

Ever grab a dog's ears?

Prov. 26:17

Mark Roberts

"He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a dog by the ears" (Prov. 26:17).

I am a huge fan of dogs. Big ones, small ones, tall ones, fat ones. I love dogs. They are friendly, loyal, fun, loyal, hard working, loyal, furry and loyal (not necessarily in that order). I once heard an old story that when God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden part of the punishment was that a huge divide opened between them and the animal kingdom. In the last second before the chasm separated people and animals, the story went, the dog jumped across to forever stand with humans. While that story certainly is not biblical it sounds pretty good to me because it reminds me of most of the dogs I have ever known.

But as friendly and obedient as dogs can be only a complete idiot would try to pick up a dog by his ears. That is a vivid image, isn't it? Care to hold a Doberman by those short little ears? What about swinging a full-sized Lab by his big floppy ears? We instinctively know better. To grab a dog by his ears is to guarantee pain and injury — and not to the dog!

Solomon plays off this easy-to-see picture to forcefully remind us to mind our own business. Fooling with someone else's problems, butting into other's arguments, meddling in other's affairs is just not smart. In fact, it is just about as smart as grabbing a dog by his ears. When I see some folks in a big wrangle and I am tempted to step in and get everyone straightened out I just need to think about those canine ears. Then I will be reminded how my interference is not wanted or needed.

That is a pretty practical proverb, isn't it? I am amazed at the number of people who think the Bible is some outdated book that says nothing about life today. I expect those folks have never cracked Proverbs! It is just brimming with good ideas, wisdom, funny word pictures and more — all designed to help us see the best way to live. It is an enormously relevant

book that does not take a Ph.D. to understand. Did you understand about the dog's ears? Then you are ready to read Proverbs. Give it a try. You will be dazzled with the simple wisdom of God's word, and your life will be better for following it. Trust God's wisdom! Try some of Proverbs today.

Plan of Salvation

By Jon W. Quinn

Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
(ACTS 2:38)

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinners were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

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Atheistic Attacks on the Biblical Nobility of Woman

By Jon W. Quinn

Many leaders of feminists movements charge that Christianity degrades women. Many of them prefer atheistic humanism. Has Christianity really

been the source of such persecution? Or is it a trumped up charge - propaganda? True Christianity does not degrade women, but atheism does.

Consider some statements by unbelievers. Perhaps the most famous is the man who devised a theory by which he attempted to explain human existence apart from creation by God. Charles Darwin gained the admiration of atheists everywhere. Do you know what he said about the impact his theory has on the state of womanhood? He said that through evolution <quote> “Man is more courageous, pugnacious and energetic than woman, and has more inventive genius.” He also said that “...man attains to a higher eminence than woman in whatever he takes up - whether requiring deep thought, reason, imagination, or merely the use of senses and hands.” These quotes are from his book “The Descent of Man” which was his sequel to “The Origin of the Species.”

Charles Smith, past president of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, said, “I will not say what the implications are, but man’s brain is considerably larger than woman’s.” He was explaining why more women seem to be interested in spiritual things.

On the other hand, the Bible never hints at such differences between the intellectual capabilities of men and women. It says concerning the good woman, “Strength and dignity are her clothing. She smiles at the future. She opens her mouth in wisdom.” (See Proverbs 31:25,26 and its surrounding context). And that’s the truth!