

Expository Files

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The Front Page

"A Very Odd Thing"?

By Jon W. Quinn

It is interesting how that, with a slight twist of a phrase, one can make an issue into something that it really is not. One can take almost any controversial issue and, with skillful use of language make things appear to be different than it really is. Political and social spokesmen are often called "spinners" because they put a "spin" on the facts to make them look favorable to the politician who's interests and causes which they serve.

There are lots of items on the social agenda today, and so it is not surprising that controversial subjects receive their fair share of "spin". Take the following as a case in point:

Most of us are familiar with California's "proposition 8" which states that marriage is to be between a man and a woman. That is precisely what God appointed in the beginning (Genesis 2:23,24) and is not a new or strange concept at all. It passed by popular vote, thus making it the law of California in addition to being the law of God.

The California Supreme Court recently upheld the law. That ruling brought this reaction by David Hyde Pierce (the actor who played the brother of Dr. Frasier Crane on the TV sitcom "Frasier"), who had married his long time partner (and the court ruled that such "marriages" could remain in force). He called it a "very odd thing" that strangers have a vote on his private decision to marry.

Now, that is not what the vote was about at all. It was not about voting on anyone's private decision to marry. It was about whether California was going to recognize the traditional (as well as Scriptural) definition of marriage or redefine it into something new. The issue is not "who can marry who?" but rather "what is marriage?" It is not whether Pierce and others of his community can live together and make a home together. It is not about whether homosexual partners can have the same legal rights as married people with reference to estate, insurance and so forth. Anyone can contract those things with others. It is about what constitutes a marriage. It is Pierce's private decision as to his lifestyle and with who he is going to live. It is not his private decision as to what constitutes marriage. That is what the people of California voted on when they went to the polls.

A Prepared Heart:

...to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach it to others.

Ezra 7:10

By Jon W. Quinn

The Scriptures say, "And Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." (Ezra 7:10). This verse is actually a summary of Ezra's life and purpose. He was determined to fully accept the Lord's

direction in life. This desire came from deep conviction and reverence for God. This led Ezra to seek out the Lord's will in His revealed Word, the Scriptures.

It is no different today for those who desire to be faithful men and women of God. This is a worthy desire to have, but it is not fulfilled by happenstance or serendipity. It takes purpose of heart. "On this day, I resolve to live for God and all that this entails." As Ezra knew, this purpose involves seeking to know the law of the Lord, to do it, and to teach it to others.

A Christian Named Ampliatus and His Friends

Some complain that the Lord's will is too difficult to understand. But others, like Ezra, have had no problem in understanding it. There is a whole list of just plain, regular folks in Rom. 16 who all understood it quite well. Notice some of them:

8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.

9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

10 Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.

11 Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.

12 Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord. (Romans 16:8-12)

Now, what else do you know about any of these people other than what you have read here in these verses? Nothing! These are not people of fame or fortune. They are common, everyday people. They are "regular folks" as far as worldly renown is concerned. But they served their God in a commendable way. They were approved and worked hard for the Lord. They were successful in the same way as Ezra was: they had prepared their hearts to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and judgments." So can we all.

Childs Play

Timothy is said to have understood it as well. Of course, he was a preacher and had the extraordinary experience of companionship with the apostle Paul.

But wait. It was not Paul who first familiarized Timothy with the sacred writings. Timothy was knowledgeable in the Scriptures long before he had ever met Paul, or before he had ever thought about being a preacher of the gospel. That knowledge of the Scriptures gave Timothy a great advantage when he did finally meet Paul in that it allowed Timothy to critically examine the things Paul was teaching.

Paul writes of this in his second epistle to Timothy:

*14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,
15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

(2 Timothy 3:14-15)

So, Timothy knew the sacred writings even from childhood long before meeting Paul. Who had been Timothy's instructors? It had been his mother and grandmother that had passed along their faith to Timothy:

For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. (2 Timothy 1:5)

See the point? When we seek to know the law of the Lord, we can come to a clear enough understanding of it to do it and to teach to others. It was meant to be that way.

Why is There Misunderstanding?

The fact is, Jesus said that some would never understand. But it was not because of a lack of ability but rather a lack of will. They have unprepared hearts. To understand, Jesus insisted that one must desire to have God in his or her life. He or she must be willing to open eyes, ears and heart.

The parable of the sower sowing seed is a case in point, well illustrating how important it is for us to prepare our hearts to understand and receive the words of Christ (Matthew 13:3-9; 18-23). One who is unwilling will often complain it is just too difficult to understand, but Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15).

In dealing with a rebellious people, the Lord chose Isaiah to be His prophet. Through Isaiah, Jehovah charged, "I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not hear." (Isaiah 65:12). These people had turned their backs on God, and the more alienated they became the more their nation's problems grew until finally their nation fell.

They did not answer God's call. It is important for us to understand that God still calls today; not through prophets like Isaiah but through the gospel of Jesus Christ, His Son. The Scriptures affirm that God "called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Answering this call means bringing our lives into harmony with the teachings of the gospel; to "walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

We do not know what the future holds for our own nation today. We can continue to ignore God's call and slide into tragic

defeat just the way Isaiah's people did long ago. Or, we can remember our foundation and reclaim it. Though none of us as individuals can decide for our nation, we each can decide for ourselves to answer the call of God. Prepare your heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to share with others the Lord's statutes and judgments.

Effects of Sin
Genesis 19
By Ethan R. Longhenry

The story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 is quite revealing for many reasons, but especially in regards to the effects of sin on people and their decision-making. At least four circumstances in the story show the different, deleterious effect of sinfulness on the people involved.

Sodom has a reputation for great sinfulness (Genesis 13:13). The report has come to God, and He sends His angels, in the form of men, to the city (Genesis 18). They lodge for the night with Lot, Abraham's nephew (Genesis 19:1-4). Then the difficulty begins.

But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; and they called unto Lot, and said unto him, "Where are the men that came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them."

And Lot went out unto them to the door, and shut the door after him. And he said, "I pray you, my brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters that have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your

eyes: only unto these men do nothing, forasmuch as they are come under the shadow of my roof."

And they said, "Stand back."

And they said, "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them."

And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and drew near to break the door (Genesis 19:4-9).

The Sodomites demand to do a horrendous thing in violating guests. Lot tries to bargain with them, but they will hear none of it.

We will set aside the ethical questions involving Lot's wager and instead focus on the reaction on the Sodomites. They are offended at Lot's "judgment." But what did Lot say that was so condemnatory?

Some reason that the Sodomites' reaction comes, in part, from previous experience with Lot. That may or may not be; we cannot say either way. But we do see that Lot "dares" to say that the Sodomites intend to "do wickedly" (Genesis 19:7). That, it seems, sets off the Sodomites. This sojourner now presumes to judge their behavior!

They are exactly right, but so is Lot: their intended action is wicked. Even in the twenty-first century, most people would recognize that what the Sodomites intended to do is wrong.

The Sodomites cannot really argue against what Lot says, and so they condemn him for his righteous judgment. Their consciences were pricked by his words, but it did not lead to repentance!

Such is the reaction that many have when their sinful actions are exposed for what they are. Their claims are bolstered in America by the growth of relativism in postmodern thinking: every individual decides what is right and wrong for him or herself. Therefore, if a person does not feel that their actions are sinful, they're not, no matter what anyone else might tell them. The entire idea that any behavior can be objectively called "sin" is even under fire! In such a climate, therefore, the reaction makes sense: who, really, can be the judge of such actions?

Too many in the modern world forgot the same thing that the Sodomites forgot: there is a God, and He does have an objective standard of right and wrong. Lot can call their actions "wicked" because God calls them "wicked" (Genesis 19:13)! The Sodomites can attempt to justify themselves, but they will not succeed.

It is important for us to remember that God is the ultimate Judge, not ourselves, and we must always speak His truth with love and compassion (James 4:12, Matthew 7:1-5, Ephesians 4:15). Nevertheless, we must call out sin for what it is (Ephesians 5:11). People might demand to know who we are to "judge" them. We can remember that the Sodomites asked Lot the same thing, and it certainly did not justify them. Avoiding the matter does not change the sin-- but it does show the level that many will go to in order to justify their actions. They know, deep down, that their actions are unjustifiable or at least open to criticism, but it is easier to condemn the messenger than it is to repent. Therefore, we see that one effect of sin is the willingness to condemn anyone as a "judge" who calls out their behavior for what it is, rather than coming to terms with the error of their ways.

The story continues, and things do not improve.

But the men put forth their hand, and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves to find the door (Genesis 19:10-11).

The angels intervene to save Lot from certain death, striking the Sodomites with blindness. We are not told exactly how this blindness was accomplished, but it certainly does not stop the Sodomites. They persist in their futile attempts to satisfy their lusts.

Such represents the blindness that sin causes. They do not understand their physical blindness as an indication of the folly of their pursuit, and they continue, ever doggedly, in their attempt for satisfaction.

Most people do not experience such an evident and specific sign from the power of God, but how many ignore or deny the consequences of their sins? How many drug addicts, sexually immoral persons, gamblers, abusers, and others suffer great physical, emotional, or mental anguish because of their sin and yet persist in it?

Such people are likely not thinking clearly, just like the Sodomites of old. They have so entirely given themselves over to their sin that they obey its every command, regardless of the consequences. Any qualms or desires to change are often suppressed because of fear or frustration in failure. Even after sin has made life miserable, many such persons remain in it.

Sin, therefore, often blinds those who serve it, and they intend to fulfill the lusts of the flesh no matter the cost.

And the men said unto Lot, "Hast thou here any besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whomsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of the place: for we will destroy this place,

because the cry of them is waxed great before the LORD: and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it."

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, who married his daughters, and said, "Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy the city." But he seemed unto his sons-in-law as one that mocked (Genesis 19:12-14).

We will speak shortly regarding Lot's compromises, but here it is clear that the men to whom his daughters are betrothed have more affinity with the Sodomites than with Lot. We are not told why it is that they think he is joking with them, but it is clear (as if it weren't already) that the Sodomites have no fear of God. Lot's words do not faze these men in the least, and they of all people have a reason to give him at least some credence.

Most people who have an inkling about the power of God, realization of what He has done in the past, and the ability to perceive wickedness, would probably at least schedule an impromptu vacation when such a message was brought. Those who were wise would not trifle with such a message.

But Lot's sons-in-law do not have that fear. "Who is this God who would destroy the city?" they may ask themselves. Perhaps they did not understand why God would think to destroy Sodom. Lot was a foreigner anyway. It must be one of his crazy foreign ideas.

Peter speaks of people in his own days who mock the idea that God will come one day in judgment (2 Peter 3:1-7). He reminds them of the days of Noah and the flood, and we could add to that the day of God's visitation upon Sodom. Yet how many today openly mock the idea that Christ will return and all people will be called into judgment? How many others think that they have no reason to fear for such a day, since they do not perceive the wickedness around

them or in themselves (cf. Matthew 7:21-23)? How many think that those who proclaim the return of the Lord to be joking?

God, on the other hand, is quite serious, and the resurrection of Jesus is the proof (Acts 17:30-31). Human beings have developed sophisticated technology that allows for warnings for all sorts of natural disasters, and many people are more than willing to drop everything and flee when the signal is given. God has provided constant warning regarding spiritual disaster, and yet how many are willing to heed it and obey (Matthew 24:45-51)?

A life of sin in the midst of sin separates people so thoroughly from God that they often do not pay any attention to His warnings, just as Lot's sons-in-law would not listen to him. Sin, therefore, separates from God and leads to great hostility with Him, so that God's word seems to be folly or a joke (1 Corinthians 2:11-15, Romans 8:1-9).

God visits Sodom in judgment; the city is destroyed with fire and sulfur from Heaven (Genesis 19:17-28). Lot's wife did not make it; she looked back and became the pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). Lot and his two daughters make it safely to Zoar, and then flee to the hills.

And the first-born said unto the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father."

And they made their father drink wine that night: and the first-born went in, and lay with her father; and he knew not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that the first-born said unto the younger, "Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him

drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father."

And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he knew not when she lay down, nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. And the first-born bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-ammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day (Genesis 19:31-38).

In a very concrete way, Lot now lies in the bed he prepared for himself. He was given the choice of where to live, and he picked the verdant valley (Genesis 13:10-11). His tent moved from being pitched toward Sodom to being in Sodom, sitting in the gate of the city, and even betrothing his daughters to Sodomites (cf. Genesis 19). His wife is now a pillar of salt because of it all, and now his own daughters are compromised.

They know that there are still men running around; they are just convinced that they are cursed, for whatever reason, and will not obtain husbands. Therefore, in their minds, they will either be wards of their father forever and childless, or they can compel their father to become drunk and have children through incest. Their choice is evident.

Even if we were to grant that such is their choice, and that no man would want them after the events in Sodom, they still break one of the great social taboos of most of history. It demonstrates that regardless of any attempt of Lot to instruct his daughters in righteousness, sinful, worldly, result-motivated thinking dictated their decisions. Only in a sin-affected mind does it make more sense to have children through incest than to have no children at all!

We have been called to live in the world to be witnesses for Christ while remaining not of this world in our conduct (1 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 12:2). That is a tough balance to strike. But the effect of pervasive sinfulness is made evident in the example of the daughters of Lot. They probably did not learn from Lot that it was more important to have children sinfully than to be childless, but they learned the lesson anyhow. And, for whatever reason-- a lack of instruction, the influence of their mother, or just the influence of Sodom itself-- any teaching of Lot to the contrary did not win the day.

How many other "good, righteous" young men and women turn away from God and begin living according to the standards of the world, choosing the worldly perspective and not the godly one? They may not make the same decision as Lot's daughters, but when confronted with the righteous, sacrificial way of life versus the sinful, desire-satisfying way of life, they choose the latter. Perhaps it was a lack of instruction. Perhaps one or both parents were not the influences they should have been. Maybe they just imbibed too deeply from the well of culture, or allowed their friends to change their views. The result is the same.

Sin is not just a problem of the flesh; it is also a problem of the mind. That's where it starts (Matthew 5:28, Philippians 4:8, 2 Corinthians 10:5, James 1:14-15), and that's when the calculations begin. Lot's daughters knew what they were doing. Because of it, Lot is now thoroughly disgraced.

Lot goes from a man of much wealth and stature to a man residing in the hills, an exile from men, with his daughters and (grand)sons. Moab and Ammon will obtain shares of land near Israel but will always be inferior. Lot may have survived the destruction of Sodom,

but he did not emerge unscathed. Such goes to show what happens when righteous people accommodate themselves to sin.

Sin's effect can even be felt among the righteous, leading them to no longer think according to God's ways, but accommodating themselves to the worldview of their environment. When their minds are conformed to this world, their actions soon follow (Romans 12:1). Such is why it is not enough to simply oppose sin in the flesh-- we must also oppose sin in the mind, and learn to conform even our thoughts and perspective to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

Sodom is now a byword for sin, and its effects are evident. Those in sin are hostile to God, ignorant of Him, often blind to the consequences of their own behavior, condemnatory to those who call them out for their behavior, and an influence for ill upon others. Such is why it is so important to follow the Apostle's command:

Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good (Romans 12:9b).

Are You Enjoying The Benefits Of Gratitude?

(1 Thess. 5:18)

Warren E. Berkley

"Gratitude," said G. K. Chesterton, "is the mother of all virtues."

Higher authorities echo the vital role of gratitude: "...in everything give thanks," (1 Thess. 5:18) and "enter His gates with thanksgiving," (Psa. 100:4).

Gratitude does at least three good things. **When directed to God, it places the glory where it should be, in Him.** “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord,” (see 1 Cor. 1:31; Psa. 7:17; Psa. 92:1-2). In the absence of sincere gratitude to God, one can gradually slip into an ugly moral spiral (Rom. 1:21). “A true Christian is a man who never for a moment forgets what God has done for him in Christ, and whose whole comportment and whole activity have their root in the sentiment of gratitude.” (John Baillie)

Further, gratitude is good for our emotional health. The habit of grumbling and complaining comes from and further fuels an inner bitterness that can make you miserable. It is hard to get an angry outburst from a grateful heart filled with joy and praise. “Thankfulness is the air conditioner of the soul. It blows out the stale overheated air and brings cool refreshing breezes to the soul,” (Phil Pringle).

Third, gratitude encourages the people you thank. Thankfulness causes the recipient to spend a moment knowing they have contributed some good to others. You are honoring good people and telling them they matter. Paul is anxious to express his thanks to the Christians in Philippi (Phil. 1:3), Rome (Rom. 1:8), but he also told the troubled church at Corinth, he was thankful to God for them (1 Cor. 1:4).

I challenge you to fuller participation in gratitude. The benefits are great.

Voices from Heaven

Rev. 1:10; 14:2

David Smitherman

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet...And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. Revelation 1:10; 14:2

What a momentous Lord's Day: John heard voices from heaven (sometimes the voice of Deity, other times the voices of the heavenly host) and wrote down what he heard. These voices still speak and their messages are as relevant to us today as they were when first heard on Patmos. Listen to what they say:

There is but one God---*And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." ...After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God;" 14:6-7; 19:1. Political correctness, the rise of the Islamic religion, and postmodernism (there is no ultimate truth to which all are amenable) have created a culture making it mandatory that this message be repeated with frequency and fervor. There is a God. There is but one God. That God is the One revealed in the Bible.*

God and His kingdom are supreme---*Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." 11:15. God's rule (kingdom) is unlike those of men. The latter rise and fall (Daniel 2:36-43) but God's rule shall never cease*

(Daniel 2:44-45). Whatever civil citizenship we may enjoy, that society will eventually find itself spoken of in the past tense in history books. Not so with those ruled by God.

Come to heaven for ultimate truth---*After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."... And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. 4:1, 11:12* There is but one ultimate and objective truth. Those desiring knowledge of that truth must "come up here", i.e. to heaven, the one and only repository of wisdom (Proverbs 2:6-7; Colossians 2:2-3).

Come out of the world---*I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities."*18:4-5. Citizens of heaven (those who heed the voices from heaven) will not pattern their lives after worldly standards. They will be "children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation," and will "shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15)

Hostile Witnesses

"He saved others ... let Him save Himself"

Topical Article

By Jon W. Quinn

In a court of law, attorneys will call upon witnesses that they think will help their own client's cause. There are sometimes occasions where an attorney will turn to the judge concerning his own witness and say, "I would like to treat this witness as a 'hostile

witness." Usually, this would occur when the attorney has called upon a witness to give testimony, but had earlier been misled by the witness into thinking that his/her testimony would bolster his case, but on the stand the witness perhaps changes his/her story and begins to give damaging testimony. Having such a witness declared a "hostile witness" gives more leeway in questioning.

But just because someone is a hostile witness does not necessarily mean that their testimony is useless. Sometimes, even a hostile witness can help get to the truth, even a lying hostile witness will sometimes unintentionally reveal pertinent facts to help arrive at the truth. For example, if they lie, and it can be proven, the nature of the lie might well help point to the truth.

In the New Testament, there are several witnesses who gave testimony regarding Christ. You and I each form our own private jury as we determine what the testimony means. All of us must consider the evidence and render a verdict in our own minds. Many ignore the testimony and just go with their prejudice and ignorance. Lots of foolish things are said and thought about Jesus today. But God holds us responsible for coming to an honest and accurate conclusion about the matter. With something so very important, it is foolish not to even consider the testimony of the witnesses. (John 3:16-21).

When it comes to "hostile witnesses" concerning Jesus, we have plenty. You might think their testimony is damaging to faith, but if you think that, you'd be wrong. In fact, it is because their motive was to destroy Jesus that their testimony becomes so valuable. We know that they are not intentionally saying things to cause us to believe in Jesus because they prefer that no one believe in Him! Consider the testimony from the hostile witnesses and see what we can learn about the truth.

Consider the Pharisees (Matthew 27:39-43)

"You honor, I would like the Pharisees to be treated as hostile witnesses" (I doubt there can be much objection to that!). The Pharisees were bitterly opposed to the Lord. Instead of accepting His authority, they said He cast out demons "by Beelzebub!" That's a pretty serious charge to make against the Man from Nazareth! There is no doubt that these witnesses are "hostile" because of their opposition to the Lord. Consider their mocking of Jesus even as He hung on the cross, without any pity or regret, they said, "He saved others, let Him save Himself." (Matthew 27:42).

Actually, this is powerful testimony because it is not coming from disciples of Jesus, but from His sworn enemies. They are referring to His good works in healing and even raising people from the dead! Even in their mocking, they admit that Jesus did save others! (See also John 11:43-48).

Rather than accepting what those miracles implied, they chose to rebel against Him. The Pharisees could not (or would not) put two and two together. Prejudice did that!

However, not all of them were so blinded. There was Nicodemus, for example (see John 3:1-2). He said that at least some of the Pharisees knew that the signs Jesus did were significant evidence that God was with Him. And consider the words of the blind man who was given sight. (John 9:28-33). The Pharisees, determined to reject Jesus at all costs, settled on the notion that Jesus' power to do good came from evil. But truly, the miracles of Jesus show that He was approved of God (Acts 2:22). The miracles are part of the evidence on which our faith stands (John 20:30-31). And even the "hostile witnesses" who were present affirm that the miracles really took place!

Consider Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27:1-5)

"Your honor, in light of the betrayal, I would like for Mr. Iscariot to be treated as a hostile witness". Since Judas betrayed Jesus to the chief priests and elders, we would think that he would have some negative things to say about Jesus. We saw his unwillingness to follow Jesus start to grow as he became disenchanted, and that disenchantment was fueled by his growing greed. (John 12:4-6; Luke 22:3-6).

But Judas offered no defense for his despicable actions. He did not seek to justify his treachery. Instead, he said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." Though he played the part of an enemy or traitor, Judas' testimony rings down through the ages as strong evidence of what he truly thought of Jesus.

The blood of Christ is, indeed, innocent blood. (1 Peter 1:18-19). Jesus was the only truly innocent man who ever lived, and only His blood will freely and completely remove sin (Hebrews. 9:14). By the shed blood of Christ, it is possible for man to live again. None can approach God except through and by virtue of the redeeming blood of Christ. (Ephesians. 1:7; 2:13-18). Judas admits that he did not give Jesus up because Jesus was guilty, but because He was innocent.

Consider Pilate (Luke 23:13-25)

"Your honor, I would like Pilate to be treated as a hostile witness in that while he was governor, he gave the order which allowed Jesus to be put to death." Pilate was the governor of Judea, having been appointed by Caesar. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, and did make some short-lived effort to defend Him. No doubt, what scared Pilate the most was the threat of his incompetence being reported to Caesar (John 19:12).

In order to appease the Jewish leaders, he had Jesus scourged. (John 19:1-6). He perhaps thought that when Jesus' enemies saw Jesus in the weakened, deplorable condition after the scourging, they would be appeased. Pilate underestimated the intense hatred the evil Priests and Pharisees had toward Jesus. Pilate will always be known as a weak, cowardly politician who allowed, and even ordered, the Son of God to be put to death.

Pilate's testimony, as the other hostile witness, rings down through the ages. He said three times to Jesus' enemies, "I find no fault in Him at all." If anyone wanted to find fault with Jesus to excuse his part in the crucifixion, it would be Pilate. But he found none. Thus, again, Jesus is indeed that sacrificial Lamb without blemish and without spot (Isaiah 53:7-8).

Thus, all of our hostile witnesses bear strong, favorable testimony regarding Jesus the Christ. So, even without considering what the friendly witnesses have to say about Jesus, what is your verdict regarding the Christ as you hear these hostile witnesses?

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:

Acts 2:36-38

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

(Acts 2:36-38).

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.

The Final Page 16.6

Godliness Makes The Difference

Warren E. Berkley

Samuel Johnson prepared a monumental work first published in 1755, *Dictionary Of The English Language*. He read the great works of English literature, devoured text books, catalogued massive libraries, organized a staff of writers and research people, and lived in pursuit of the task for almost ten years.

Johnson was an enigma in person. A brilliant master of words and syntax, but a miserable man who was often broke, alienated from family, struggling with failed relationships and never with full commitment of heart to be a godly man.

Reading a book about Johnson's struggles, I've become reacquainted with the fact that **intelligence and eloquence never finds their highest potential without godliness**. For one thing, an intelligent eloquent writer or speaker can say almost anything well, regardless of heart and life.

Samuel Johnson, for example, wrote *against the use of alcohol*: "these liquors, my Lords, liquors of which the strength is heightened by distillation, have a natural tendency to inflame the blood, to consume the vital juices, destroy the force of the vessels, contract the nerves, and weaken the sinews . . . they not only disorder the mind for a time, but by a frequent use precipitate old age, exasperate diseases, and multiply and increase all the infirmities to which the body of man is liable." {See Prov. 20:1}

Johnson, however, wrote with equal eloquence *in favor of alcohol*: "The Cyder, Sir, which I am now rescuing from contemptuous Comparisons, has often exhilarated my social hours, enlivened the Freedom of Conversation, and improved the Tenderness of Friendship, and shall not therefore now want a Panegyrist. It is one of those few Subjects on which an Encomiast may expatiate without deviating from the Truth."

Give a good writer almost any subject of controversy, and he can write well on either side. We recognize this as duplicity.

Godliness enables us to use our talents with integrity and reverence to God. Godly people serve God and others in high quality because

they have given their talents to God, to be used under His instruction and for His glory.

“Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.” Heb. 13:15

Johnson Quotations from the book Samuel Johnson: The Struggle, by Jeffrey Meyers.