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BIDEFORD

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AFTER THIS MANNER....PRAY YE
(A Study In the Lord's Prayer)
PART 12

This part of the study will conclude our examination of the sixth petition: "LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION Matt.6:13.

It has been stated already that temptation in itself is not sin. However, this statement needs to be explained more fully.

Being tempted does not make us guilty; sin lies in YIELDING to temptation. No person can stop the activity of Satan; and the Devil can be a real menace to us, indeed he is, but this of itself is not sin. This principle is illustrated in Deuteronomy 22 where many civil laws and regulations were laid down for national Israel. One law deals with virgins. If a maiden was approached by a man and she SUBMITTED she was guilty, but if she cried out and struggled then she was deemed to be innocent. It is submitting to temptation which is the sin.

In the life of a believer there can be times when Satan will keep up a battery of attacks. When this is the case some Christians may become dispirited, low and depressed - even doubting the love of God toward them; but never must severe temptation be taken as a sign that God's love is withdrawn. We do well to ponder the temptations of Christ. It was in ALL POINTS - everything which is COMMON TO MAN, yet by an audible voice from heaven God spoke proclaiming Him to be His BELOVED Son - 'beloved' meaning 'supremely loved.' Temptation and God's love may well stand together on times.

The fire is not only one of the necessities to the goldsmith, it is also one of his delights, for in the process of refining, he has the joy of seeing the dross removed, and the gold shining forth in greater purity.

Thomas Watson, the Puritan, said: "The temptations of a godly man causes the increase of grace;" this can, indeed it should be so. The more Potiphar's wife sought to entice that attractive young man Joseph, the STRONGER was his opposition, cf.Gen. 39:7-12. The more the enemy storms the

fort, the more he is to be repelled.

Another old writer stated: "Just as the bellows increase the flame, so temptation increases the flame of grace." Martin Luther said: "One severely tempted (or tested) Christian is worth a thousand of the other sort."

Some reading this may be thinking - Watson and Luther may well speak thus, they were great warriors of the faith, but not all are of their ilk! Some of us are overcome by the tempter, and to our shame we have to admit our failure. In this, none need despair, for the best of men have not known victory every time. One has only to read the words of the great Apostle Paul in Rom.7:15-25 to learn of his inner conflicts. Think also of David in the matter of Bathsheba, or his numbering of the people. These were grievous sins indeed, yea they brought great dishonour upon the name of the Lord, and such defection is to be deplored; yet even for such dire wounds as these, there is balm for the stricken heart.

Though faith be overcome on times and a believer strays into enemy territory, and in consequence becomes wounded and suffers severely, such is the vital principle of grace that 'His seed remaineth in us.'

A TRUE believer may be foiled - alas it is possible - but he can never be conquered. He may lose ground on times in the battle, but he will never lose the final victory. "Grace is shaken, but not destroyed," said Augustine.

Never must a Christian who has been overcome by temptation cast away his anchor, or give way to despairing thoughts. "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand." Psa.37:24. God can make failures turn to ultimate advantage. Many a man and woman has been made much more circumspect and watchful by virtue of a previous fall. This however must in no way make a person careless, rather are we to understand that by a fall many a CARE-LESS person has been made CARE-FULL. All Christians have had their falls from time to time; this should have the effect of making us more vigilant and cautious.

Satan is skilled in his deceits, and his approach to

the child of God is so often from a spiritual angle. He will cause a believer to so dwell upon the grace of God, and the fact that they are eternally secure, that he or she becomes OVER CONFIDENT. Peter was caught with this bait. "Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended," Matt.26:33. He spoke in a most superior vein, as if he had more grace than all the other disciples. He considered he was so grounded and established in the faith that, it mattered not what the others did, he would NEVER fail. Thus he was LED into temptation, and he did fall, and fall miserably.

So deceptive is Satan that he can tempt men to sin under the guise of love to Christ, and such are so beguiled that they really believe it. In Matthew 16 our Lord began to tell the disciples of His approaching death. In verse 22 we are given Simon Peter's reaction. "Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee Lord, this shall not be unto Thee." Peter really thought he was acting in love and devotion to his Master, but he WAS NOT as verse 23 shows clearly: "But He (Christ) turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." In no way was Peter acting spiritually in this; he thought he was, probably others thought he was, but the very sentiments which Peter was expressing were nothing less than inspired of Satan. Such are the wiles of the Devil.

It is because of such subtlety that our Lord instructs us to "PRAY AFTER THIS MANNER" that we be not "LED INTO TEMPTATION." So often the temptation is couched in such a deceptive manner that of ourselves we cannot detect anything wrong, indeed in all probability we may think it to be right. Referring to Peter again in the upper room when the Lord was washing the disciples' feet. "Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet." John 13:8. In this Peter thought that he was acting out of respect and honour to Christ. But was he? The words which follow show that Peter was sadly mistaken. He was acting out of a modesty which was SINFUL. Although it may have appeared as

an act of humility, yet it was not. How careful every Christian needs to be! Are we not cast absolutely upon a power outside of ourselves for help, guidance, and protection? Even humility and modesty can be at the instigation of the adversary. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct His steps. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing." Jer. 10:23-24. If Peter who had TRUE grace, and Adam who had PERFECT grace, were deceived in the way in which they were, then how we all need to cry earnestly, ever praying "AFTER THIS MANNER... .LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION."

What power or ability has man in himself even to identify temptation, let alone resist it? Does not this completely refute the teachings of "free-will." Arminian free-willism is a gigantic nonsense from start to finish, and one of the most cunningly devised fables ever invented by the Devil. Left to OURSELVES we are as gullible to swallow temptation as a fish is to swallow the bait. We are as a tinder dry heath that catches the first spark and is then ablaze. Oh the errors of loose evangelicalism! The insipidness of their preaching! The Christian life is no easy existence, we are as those walking through a minefield.

"Principalities and powers,
Mustering their unseen array,
Watch for thine unguarded hours,
Watch and Pray."

True Christianity is a MILITARY LIFE. There are lions in the track, Goliaths on the field, serpents all along the way; yet today vast numbers of professing Christians are as those spoken of in Job 21:12: "They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ."

If there was as much 'clashing of swords' heard coming from the Church as there is music, then the world might better understand what the truth of God really is.

The road to God and glory is beset with thieves, robbers, and enemies of every description. As we journey on, our job is not to dialogue with them, neither are we to provide entertainment be it 'classical,' 'rock,' 'guitar

quartet,' or 'coffee and burgers.' We are to wield "the sword of the Spirit which is THE WORD OF GOD," cf.Eph.6:17. By this we not only put down the enemies, we also PROTECT ourselves. So with the sword ever drawn we are to keep marching. Luther said: "the bird that sits, gets shot."

If a Christian ever becomes static and ceases to develop, then that Christian is in great danger. If a cyclist stops moving he immediately falls off! The believer who is 'pressing toward the mark' will not be drifting; and it is invariably the DRIFTERS who hit the rocks. How many there are who DRIFT into temptation. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of His own lust, and enticed." James 1:14. DRAWN AWAY, ENTICED.

If we would not be overcome with temptation, then we should AVOID that which occasions sin. Company and associations have a great influence and force to awaken passion and lust. If a person would avoid infection, then that person will not knowingly go into an infected house. If a man desires to live temperately, then he will not associate with those who drink. When Joseph was enticed by his mistress he SHUNNED HER cf. Gen.39:10. A Christian should not go near, even to the borders of anything questionable.

There are many who pray: "Lead us not into temptation" yet THEMSELVES RUN RIGHT INTO IT. Even from an APPEARANCE of evil we should abstain, cf. 1 Thess.5:22.

"Christian walk carefully; danger is near!
On in thy journey with trembling and fear;
Snares from without, and temptations within,
Seek to entice thee once more into sin.

Christian walk prayerfully; oft wilt thou fall,
If thou forget on thy Saviour to call;
Safe thou shalt walk through each trial and care,
If thou art clad in the armour of prayer."

To be continued.

W. H. Molland

THE DEATH PENALTY FOR MURDER

In Genesis 9:5,6 God said to Noah: "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man." God requires all murderers to be executed by those He has placed in authority. This requirement has not been abrogated by God in His Word, hence it must apply until the end of time. Although this penalty was reaffirmed in the Mosaic order, which passed away with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, its origin existed long before the Jews were formed into a nation. It is evident also from Genesis 4:14 that Cain thought other men would kill him when they found out he had murdered his brother.

In the New Testament, in Romans 13:4, the apostle Paul writes about the Christian's obligation of subjection to lawful authority in this way: "For he (lawful authority) is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid: for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." The purpose of the sword is not to rehabilitate or reform, but to execute those who take the sword and murder their fellow men.

The Uniqueness of the Death Penalty

1. Murder is the only transgression of God's law, written on the heart of man, for which He has appointed a penalty of universal obligation to be carried out by man. No such penalty exists, for example, for theft.
2. Man has a unique place in God's creation: he is made in the image of God. All evolutionary concepts of origins undermine the reason for this penalty.
3. God alone is the Giver, and the Sustainer of life. He alone has the right to end life. The murderer usurps this sovereign prerogative of God.
4. The time this penalty was given was also unique. It followed immediately upon the cessation of the universal

flood of judgment God brought upon mankind.

5. This penalty was given to a man, who like Adam, was the father of all subsequently born into this world. The permanence of this penalty must equal those universal appointments given by God to Adam of work, marriage and the keeping of one day in seven for worship.

6. The instrument to carry out this penalty is to be man: "by man shall his blood be shed." This cannot mean man in a private capacity, for this would be revenge. It means man in a lawful judicial capacity, as the power ordained of God, see Romans 13:4.

It is clear from Scripture that God has appointed the death penalty for murder to continue in force until the end of time. It is also to apply to all nations, in all generations. This penalty is one which honours God in His creation of man, and is the vital link in the penal system of a nation with the Creator. It is a most solemn responsibility that God has laid upon those in authority.

The Effect of Abolition of the Death Penalty for Murder

A denial of the death penalty for murder amounts to a denial for the reason God has given for it. All denials of the Word of God are a denial of God Himself, whereby man and his ideas are considered of greater importance than those of his Creator. The effects arising from such a situation are described accurately in Romans 1:18-32. We learn from this passage that a denial of God will be followed by open flagrant sin.

It is evident from Romans 13 that the purpose of law within a nation is to restrain evil, and promote good works. The laws of a nation, therefore, should prohibit all outward manifestation of offences against the good, and holy law of God. This law was given for the good of man, written in his heart at creation cf. Rom. 2:13-15, given in writing to Moses at Sinai, and was perfectly honoured in the teaching and life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Proof of the universality of this law is seen in those laws common to all nations against murder, theft, libel and slander. When a nation departs from the Divine Mandate in not applying the death penalty to murderers, we can expect to

see a deterioration in the moral content of that nation's legislation.

Striking proof of this connection may be seen in the affairs of the United Kingdom. The first debate leading to abolition of the death penalty took place in 1956. There was virtually no legislation before this time which had strongly anti-scriptural connotations. Since 1956 the following Acts have been passed by Parliament:

1957 Homicide Act. Murders categorised between capital murders - which were to carry the death penalty - and other murders. Parties to a suicide pact considered guilty of manslaughter, not murder.

1959 Obscene Publications Act. This made the definition of obscenity more subjective, and hence much more difficult to prove.

1961 Suicide Act. Suicide no longer a criminal offence.

1965 Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act. Death penalty abolished for all murders.

1967 Sexual Offences Act. This made acts of sodomy legal in some circumstances.

1967 Abortion Act. This legalised the murder of unborn children in some circumstances.

1969 Divorce Reform Act. This brought in easy divorce, further undermining marriage and the family.

1985 Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act. Divorce allowed after one year.

1985 Surrogacy Arrangements Act. This legalised private non-commercial surrogacy arrangements made by the surrogate mother.

Against this legislative backcloth other circumstances have arisen in the United Kingdom which cannot be ignored:

1. Experimentation on the human embryo (made in the image of God) takes place with the approval of Parliament. There is little prospect of this being made unlawful.

2. The disease AIDS, which is caused by promiscuity in the first instance, aided and abetted by unbiblical positions on marriage, is now a threat to everyone in the nation.

3. Murder and violence occur almost daily in the United Kingdom on an increasing scale.

Where God is not retained in the knowledge, moral decline is inevitable - God has appointed it, Romans 1:18-32. This decline is evident in the United Kingdom after the abolition of the death penalty, not only in the legislation passed by Parliament but also in the standard of behaviour existing in the electorate.

Some Objections Answered

Obj. The death penalty refers to the Jews only.

Ans. This penalty was given to Noah as the head of the only family which survived the flood. It must therefore have a relevance as universal as work, marriage and keeping one day in seven for worship.

Obj. The law of God contains the commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." This must also apply to the State.

Ans. The law of God is written in the heart of every man. This included Noah to whom, it is recorded, this penalty was first given, showing that God distinguishes between lawful, and unlawful killing. This distinction is seen also in the laws relating to murder given to the Jews in Numbers 35. In both instances it would be blasphemous to suggest that God was commanding the breaking of His commandment, "Thou shalt not kill."

Obj. The death penalty is contrary to the doctrine of Christian forgiveness.

Ans. Christian forgiveness is to be shown by those who have been offended. This is not possible in the case of murder. It might be asked, does the doctrine of Christian forgiveness forbid all punishment, in which case should all human courts of justice be dismantled?

Obj. God forgives murderers, so must we.

Ans. The forgiveness of sin, including that of murder, is the sovereign prerogative of God. The rule of practice for the Christian is to be the Word of God, in which God has appointed that murderers are to be put to death by man.

Obj. The death penalty is contrary to the nature of a God of love.

Ans. A God of love is a God of holiness and judgment: a God of love destroyed the whole world, except one family, by a flood. A God of love demanded the death of His only begotten

Son to put away sin. A God of love, in expression of both His holiness and justice, will send all impenitent sinners to hell for all eternity.

Obj. An innocent man might be executed.

Ans. God has promised to be with the diligent judge in judgment, see 2 Chronicles 19:6. Human imperfection in obedience does not annul God's plain commandment.

Obj. The death penalty is a barbaric act which is inconsistent with human dignity.

Ans. Human dignity lies in the fact that man is made in the image of his Creator. The Creator has decreed the death penalty for murder, therefore, the implementation of it is an act of obedience to the revealed will of God, and thereby God is glorified. In delegating the execution of this penalty to man in a position of lawful authority, God provides undeniable evidence of the true dignity of man, for the giving, sustaining and taking of human life is His sovereign prerogative.

Conclusion

It is a mark of the Lord's people in all generations that they sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done by those amongst whom they dwell, see Psalm 119:53,136; Lamentations 3:48; Ezekiel 9:4. In His Word God has given a sufficient revelation for His people in which they are left in no doubt about the cause, the effect and the remedy for sin.

All sin arises from a departure from the Word of God. In the case of an individual the Word of God makes it clear that evil proceeds from the human heart which is subdued only as a result of the implantation of a new nature by the Holy Spirit. In the case of a nation, its laws should promote obedience to the holy law of God, and its penal system be founded upon the only universal penalty God has left on record in His Word - the death penalty for murder. A rejection of these Biblical principles will lead to increased lawlessness in both legislation and conduct.

S. Abbott

FESTAL DAYS AND THE LAW OF GOD

PART 3

Is the celebration of Festal Days, such as Christmas and Easter, a violation of the law of God?

This third section of the study will continue to analyse, and give emphasis to the law of God; for it is only as one understands God's law and its principles, which run throughout Scripture, that one can come to a correct conclusion of the subject concerned. God's commandments are "EXCEEDING BROAD" cf. Psa.119:96. The scope of the Decalogue is wide and all-embracing. Sad to say, man is little interested in God's law; and sadder still, by far the major part of the Church has abandoned it as not being relevant to the Gospel age.

In 'turning from the holy commandment delivered unto them,' men in general, yes! and also professing Christians have turned to their own thoughts and ideas on certain matters. This is a most subtle and dangerous thing, for little do people realise, nevertheless it is a fact, that they are making themselves their god. This is the most popular religion today - HUMANISM, a looking to one's own self, one's own reasoning, the putting of confidence in the wisdom of men; focussing upon man and his THOUGHTS as being the authority. Humanism is SELF centric^ or MAN centred WORSHIP. It is no exaggeration to say that this is the most common form of IDOLATRY today.

Following on from part 2 of this study, we now examine in further detail the SECOND COMMANDMENT. " I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." Ex.20:5. "JEALOUS." The word means 'ANXIOUSLY WATCHFUL OF ONE'S RIGHTS,' 'REQUIRING EXCLUSIVE DEVOTION.'

In Holy Scripture, the marriage relationship is held up as the SUPREME ANALOGY of spiritual relationship. If a man becomes neglectful of his wife, she immediately becomes jealous of whatever it is which is causing that neglect. Let a husband or a wife be seen to become too familiar with another of the opposite sex, and at once there is a strained relationship. This is inevitable, for the marriage relationship is a most tender and delicate one, indeed it

is sacred, for it is OF GOD; therefore it is to be guarded and preserved at all cost. It is a relationship requiring EXCLUSIVE DEVOTION.

The man or woman who does not understand that God has ordained JEALOUSY in the marriage bond should never embark upon marriage at all, for jealousy is an INBUILT PROTECTION for that relationship.

This Biblical analogy will greatly help us to understand something of the meaning of this clause in the second commandment. The Almighty says, "I AM A JEALOUS GOD." He requires, 'EXCLUSIVE DEVOTION.' He is 'ANXIOUSLY WATCHFUL OF HIS RIGHTS.* "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." BEFORE ME. We are not even to cast an admiring glance to any other. The first commandment does not mean that God is to be the chief God. It means that He is to be the ONLY God. Added to this is the second commandment which in essence is - man is not to CARVE OUT or bring his IDEAS into the worship of the Almighty. Man is limited in his worship of God to the manner in which God has prescribed in His law, and of that law God is JEALOUS. He requires EXCLUSIVE DEVOTION and He ANXIOUSLY WATCHES OVER HIS RIGHTS.

Parts 1 and 2 of this study have established that the Ten Commandments are a summary of all the laws and precepts of Holy Writ. The Word of God is an enlargement and exposition of that law. This being the case, it is not difficult to find examples in the Bible of where these principles are outworked. One such example is found in Genesis A. What was Cain doing wrong? Was he worshipping another god? Was he offering a shoddy offering? No! he was doing neither. What then was wrong? Verse 7 explains: "If thou doest WELL, shalt thou not be accepted?" The only way to do WELL in the sight of God is to OBEY. Cain worshipped God in the way in which he wanted to worship, and not in the manner in which GOD had ordained. Cain INVENTED his own way. God said to him: "If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest NOT WELL, sin lieth at the door." Gen.4:7.

This could not be set out more clearly. To worship God in HIS way is acceptable, to worship Him in our OWN way is

SIN. There is no middle road, yet, alas so many Christians think that there is.

Today we see three lines of practice in Christendom:

1. The holding of the mandate of Scripture as being sole authority - theologically termed by some as the 'Regulative Principle.'
2. Blatant departure from truth leading to open idolatry.
3. A subtle alternate way which professing Christians have invented. That which God has said, PLUS supposed AIDS and HELPS.

It must be stated categorically that, in the eyes of God, this third way is not distinguished from the second way. The so-called middle way of liberal evangelicalism is but one of the lanes of the IDOLATROUS SPIRITUAL MOTORWAY. It is nothing but another of man's vain imaginations. It is a breach of the second commandment.

1 Chronicles 13 furnishes us with a further example of this principle. David, with every leader, priest and Levite in all Israel consulted together to bring again the ark of God to the Tabernacle David had pitched for it. In Ex.37:1,5 we have the MEANS provided by God for carrying the ark; in Num.4:2,5 we have God's instructions as to WHO should carry the ark; and, in Num.7:9 we are told HOW it was to be carried. David and the leaders (civil and spiritual) DECIDED to carry the ark THEIR WAY, 1 Chron.13:7. It was the way of the Philistines, 1 Sam.6:7,8. The carnally minded person will consider the intentions were both good and sincere, furthermore this was a spiritually joyful occasion, cf.1 Chron.13:8. But man's thoughts are not God's thoughts. His Word had been DISOBEYED. The sin of David and Israel's leaders - including the Levites - was DISOBEDIENCE to God's Word.

Is it not true, yet tragic, that spiritual leaders do the same today? Man made INVENTIONS are brought into the Church as AIDS in worship. Men have IDEAS which they THINK will be a help to their witness, so extra-Biblical activities invade the House of God. For all such actions every man and woman will be held accountable. If God has told us the way to do a thing in His Word, then we are not to attempt some other method even though it seems to work,

and attains the same end.

Arminian evangelistic enterprise is a glaring example of this; mass high pressure spiritual salesmanship. No one would say that none are ever saved through it. True it is, masses are deluded and brought to a false profession; nevertheless some are brought to salvation. Does it matter that these men are pedlars of only PARTIAL TRUTH? They will not preach all the counsel of God. They by-pass sovereign election, de-cry predestination, and denounce reprobation. What does this matter provided souls are saved? In the eyes of God it is of great account.

Every man and woman, boy and girl ever saved, was ordained unto eternal life before the foundation of the world, cf. Eph.1:4, Eph.2:10, 2 Tim.1:9, 2 Thess.2:13, 1 Pet.1:2. All the elect in every generation, regardless of nationality, will be saved. The invincible power of the Holy Spirit will reach them, EVERY ONE, be it in an Arminian evangelistic rally, a Calvinistic Church, or the 'Far Country' in the gutter of sin. But all those who invent OTHER FORMS of preaching, and strange METHODS of reaching sinners, other than that which is GOD ORDAINED, are noted by God. One day they will have to give account, for it is SIN. It is a violation of the second commandment. It is a reasonable question to ask, WHY do men do this? The Golden Calf of Exodus 32 provides the answer to this question.

Moses had gone up into the movant to receive the law. All the people knew he had gone up, and they were waiting for him to come down with that law, but they grew tired of the delay in receiving this God given instruction. It was their IMPATIENCE which led them to sin.

Is it not correct to say that one of the main reasons why professing Christians of our day pay such little attention to the ALL IMPORTANT Divine Mandate, is because they do not have the patience, or the desire to study, search out, and wait upon God to discover His revealed will? In consequence vast numbers get caught up in the swirl of modem gimmickry which bears no resemblance whatsoever to what GOD HAS SAID. It is much easier to devise our own way of doing things than to get down to the Scriptures of Truth and discover exactly WHAT God wants us

to do, and HOW He wants us to do it.

The impatience of the Israelites brought them to DO sane thing. They approached Aaron to make them gods, and Aaron co-operated fully, Ex.32:1,2.

Is not this the PRINCIPLE which activates Arminians today? Do not many LEADERS of Churches follow in the footsteps of Aaron? WE will form a council, set up a steering committee and do the organising. Neither are Reformed Churches strangers to this pattern of thinking. Is there not evidence to prove that ministers fall in with 'good ideas' which have originated in the pew? Again, let us have a fraternal, a conference say they, out of which came all the extra-biblical activities which now fill Chapel Notice-boards and magazines.

So AARON collected the gold, and HE made the IMAGE, it was a GOLDEN calf. It was no shoddy effort, much time, thought and effort went into it. What is more, these Israelites did not intend to turn their backs completely upon God, indeed not! Rather were they going to just do things a little differently, but it was still going to be the worship of Jehovah. Aaron proclaimed that it was to be "A FEAST UNTO THE LORD." Ex.32:5. Yes! Aaron put HIS name to it all, so it must be alright. The happenings at the foot of Sinai in 1490 BC are typical of what is going on in the Church in 1990 AD. What a warning to our generation!

What occasioned this tragic happening? IMPATIENCE and DISCONTENT with GOD'S way. When this happens, Christians will soon raise up a golden calf. In other words dissatisfaction with God's way results in disregarding what God has said, which is ALWAYS the FIRST STEP IN IDOLATRY.

Yet another example of this PRINCIPLE is found in 1 Kings 12. The twelve tribes were now divided. There were two kingdoms: Rehoboam was king down in Judah, Jeroboam was king up in the northern kingdom, and the two were enemies. The question of worship obviously arose. The temple was in Jerusalem in the south, and Jeroboam dare not let his people go there to worship or he might lose them. What was he to do? He had an IDEA. He made two golden calves and placed each in a CONVENIENT location in HIS kingdom, one in Bethel and the other in Dan.

Is it not a fact that if a thing is CONVENIENT, more often than not, it will become POPULAR? Men and women will accept even strange things if it is convenient for them so to do.

Jeroboam did NOT command his people to turn their backs upon God and worship calves instead. These calves were an EXTRA, a man invented MEANS of worship; something tangible upon which to centre. Then in conjunction with it, HE ordained a FEAST and HE fixed a DAY. "So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense." 1 Kings 12:33.

All that is being set out from the Scriptures in the early sections of this series should be carefully noted and registered, for it has a great bearing upon the subject of FESTAL DAYS AND THE LAW OF GOD. Jeroboam ordained the feast. HE fixed the day. It was ALL devised out of his OWN HEART.

In Psalm 106 we have a concise summary of Israel's history and God's dealings with them. "They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt," verse 21. "They provoked Him to anger with their inventions," verse 29. "They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them." Verses 35,36. "Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions." Verse 39. "Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance." Verse 40.

In Leviticus 10:1-7 we have the account of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offering STRANGE FIRE before the Lord. It mattered not where that fire came from, or how well it appeared to glow. It was not that which God had commanded, therefore it was STRANGE. In judgment these two men were cut off by the hand of Divine vengeance, and in that tragic happening we read Aaron remained silent. Later Moses warned Aaron that he was not to mourn for those sons, lest it appeared to God that Aaron thought more of his sons than he did of the correct order in the worship of Jehovah.

Sufficient portions of Scripture have now been cited to prove that the God of heaven is a jealous God - ANXIOUSLY WATCHFUL OF HIS RIGHTS. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me," Lev.10:3. When we come to worship, we are on HOLY GROUND. No man or woman drawing nigh unto the Most High must bring their own IDEAS or in any way be entangled with the INVENTIONS of man. God is to be sanctified - SET APART. It is Him, and HIM ONLY. He is not to be our CHIEF God, He is to be our ONLY God.

We have now seen something of the far reaching and all embracing principles which are found in the first and second commandments.

Some may retort that this teaching has been overstated, and is not COMMON BELIEF today. That may well be, due to the lack of IN-DEPTH ministry and a woeful NEGLECT of the teaching of THE LAW. But what has been stated so far is no novel interpretation. A brief glance at a couple of historic Confessions of Faith will serve to prove this point.

In the Larger Catechism of the WESTMINSTER CONFESSION question 109 reads: "What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?" The answer given is: "The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and in any way approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself, tolerating a false religion, the making of any representation of God, of all, or any of the three Persons, either inwardly in our minds, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever all superstitious devices corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented, or taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other practice whatsoever all neglect, contempt, hindering and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed."

If that is not a Biblical rule of life for the believer, then surely there cannot be one! Yet let it be said, it is based upon the LAW OF GOD - the second commandment.

In the 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH chapter 22 paragraph 1 the following statement is made: "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, voider any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures."

An abundance of further historical evidence could be brought forward to show that what has been written has been the touchstone of the faithful down through the generations. Sadly, much contemporary evidence shows that this is not common belief or practice in our day.

The discerning reader will already have detected that FESTAL DAYS are now beginning to look rather shaky.

To be continued

W. H. Molland

ONE-SIDED TEACHING

By nature all of us are prone to run to extremes, particularly so those with a philosophical turn of mind, who, seeking for unity of thought, are in great danger of forcing a unity into the sphere of their limited knowledge. To do this, they are very apt to sacrifice one side or element of the truth for another. I may be quite clear and logical at the expense of being superficial and half-orbed. A most solemn warning against this danger was supplied by the Jews in connection with their interpretation of the Messianic prophecies, by dwelling exclusively upon those which announced the glories of Christ and neglecting those which foretold His sufferings: so that even the apostles themselves were evilly affected thereby, and rebuked by Christ for such folly, Luke 24:25,26. It is at this very point that the people of God, and particularly His ministers, need to be much on their guard. Truth is twofold Heb.4:12: every doctrine has its corresponding and supplementary element, every privilege its implied

obligation. Those two sides of the truth do not cross each other, but run parallel with one another: they are not contradictory but complementary, and both must be held fast by us if we are to be kept from serious error.

Thus we must never allow the grand truth of God's sovereignty to crowd out the fact of human responsibility. The will of the Almighty is indeed invincible, but that does not mean that we are nothing better than inanimate puppets. No, we are moral agents as well as rational creatures, and throughout are dealt with by God as such. 'It must needs be that offences come,' said Christ but He at once added, 'woe to that man by whom the offence cometh' Matt.18:7. There the two things are joined together: the infallible certainty of the Divine decrees, the culpability and criminality of the human agent. The same inseparable conjunction appears again in that statement concerning the death of Christ: 'Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain' Acts 2:23. Again, our zeal for the doctrine of election must not suffer us to ignore the necessity of using means. They who reason, 'If I be elected, I shall be saved whether or not I repent and trust in Christ, are fatally deceiving themselves: 'chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth' 2 Thess.2:13, is proof. None are ever saved until they believe Luke 8:12; Heb.10:39, and therefore all are to be exhorted to do so.

Particular redemption (Christ making atonement for the sins of His own people only) must not prevent His servants from preaching the gospel to every creature and announcing that there is a Saviour for every sinner out of hell who appropriates Him for his own. Sunder not the two halves of John 6:37: all that the Father gives Christ shall come to Him, albeit the individual must seek Him Isa. 55:6; Jer.39:13. Nor does the inability of the natural man annul his accountability, for though no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him, John 6:44, his refusal to come is highly blameworthy, Prov. 1:24-31; John 5:40. Nor is a divided Christ to be presented to sinners for their acceptance. It is a delusion to imagine that His priestly

sacrifice may be received while His kingly rule is refused, that his blood will save me though I despise His government. Christ is both 'Lord and Saviour' and in that unalterable order, 2 Pet.1:11; 3:2,18, for we must throw down the weapons of our warfare against Him and take His yoke upon us in order to find rest unto our souls. Thus repentance and faith are equally necessary, Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21.

While justification and sanctification are to be sharply distinguished nevertheless they must not be divorced, 1 Cor.1:30; 6:11. 'Christ never comes into the soul unattended. He brings the Holy Spirit with Him, and the Spirit His train of gifts and graces. Christ comes with a blessing in each hand: forgiveness in one, holiness in the other,' (Thomas Adams 1650). Yet how rarely is Ephesians 2:8,9 completed by the quoting of verse 10! Again, the twin truths of Divine preservation and Christian perseverance must not be parted, for the former is accomplished via the latter and not without it. We are indeed 'kept by the power of God', yet 'through faith', 1 Pet.1:5, and if in 1 John 2:27, the apostle assured the saints 'ye shall abide in Him', in the very next verse he called on them to 'abide in Him'; as Paul also bade such to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, and then added 'For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure', Phil.2:13. Balaam wished to die the death of the righteous, but was not willing to live the life of the righteous. Means and ends are not to be separated: we shall never reach heaven unless we continue in the only way (the 'narrow' one) which leads thereto.

A W Pink

EDITORIAL

Violence, murders, and assassinations are now almost daily occurrences in Britain. Why has this appalling breakdown come upon the nation? This magazine carries an article which is relevant to the situation: 'THE DEATH PENALTY FOR MURDER'*

In the sentimental age in which we live, such a subject is not looked upon kindly; nevertheless it is the mandate of Holy Scripture, and to depart from it can only bring increased disaster.

Murderers, who are allowed to live are a POLLUTION to the land in which they dwell. "...Ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it." Num. 15:33. There are many in our prisons and on our streets, who according to the principles of the law of God should have been condemned to death. The blood of thousands of 'innocents' CRY UNTO GOD FOR JUSTICE. The pollution is such that this nation is a stench unto Almighty God, and it can 'only be cleansed by the blood of him that shed it.' God says the murderer must forfeit his life.

Whether execution for murder deters or not, is not the point. It is the nation's attitude to the LAW OF GOD which is all important. Those who are against capital punishment are in direct conflict with the God of heaven, and this is bringing its dire consequences.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION

Mr & Mrs M Abbott of Pewsey, Wiltshire, who with their seven children have been meeting regularly with us for many months, were baptized on Lord's Day 24 June and have now been received into the membership of the Assembly. Their presence among us is a great encouragement, and the addition of those who are of the same mind and spirit is greatly to the strengthening of the witness and testimony. We thank God for thus adding to the Church, and pray His rich blessing to be upon this family.