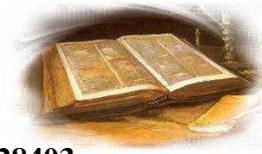


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Removing An Ancient Landmark Concluded - By Jimmy

Tuten, Mobile, Alabama

When it comes to the Christian, I know that he is not perfect (and all that is implied therein) because God says so (1 Jn. 1:10). I know, too, that I do not have to sin because by Bible says so (1 Jn. 2:1). I am not perfect, so if I sin I have an Advocate (1 Jn. 2:1). That Advocate says I must confess my sin to be forgiven (1 Jn. 1:9). Just because I do not understand how specific or detailed repentance and confession must be does not give me the right to say that the Christian cannot confess all his sins. This is removing a landmark! It is straying beyond the boundary. This business that some Christians' sins are automatically covered by the grace of God without repentance, confession and prayer, i.e., instantaneously and constantly cleansed unconditionally (the only condition being "walking in the light," which to some simply means a "penitent attitude") tends to: (a) minimize sin, (b) give a false assurance to the Christian as he sins, and (c) will lead to fellowshiping Christians who practice doctrinal error such as instrumental music in worship, etc.

At the risk of being redundant let me

say as emphatically as possible that God has not revealed what He will do with the Christian who dies while guilty of some sin of ignorance before and without repentance for that sin in some given hypothetical case. Those who are uprooting landmarks in this area have no right to say that the well intentioned will be saved even as he sins. Nor do I (as one who is in opposition to that position) have the right to say that God will show him no mercy in the judgment. Let's leave the landmarks where God placed them!

Conclusion

I think a lot of the confusion would be eliminated if our brethren who have been criticized for saying what they claim they do not believe would be more careful in what they say. I feel that their love for unity and peace obligates them in this area. It is not too late to mend fences by careful, prayerful concern regarding our speech, our attitudes and our brotherliness. Let's stop confusing the issue with our rationalizations and hypothetical examples. Go back to the stake and remove not the ancient landmarks.

I liken a lot of what has happened to

a parable that I am going to call the "Parable of the Watermelon Patch." Once a certain farmer raised watermelons for a living. Soon, however, a group of boys in the community found the location of his secluded field of fruit, and began raiding the patch. Against his better judgment, the farmer finally agreed to try a plan suggested by a neighbor. He placed a sign at the edge of the field, reading: "one melon in this patch is poisoned." The next day, when the boys saw the farmer leave for the market, they headed for his melon patch to feast on his luscious fruit that brought such delights to their taste buds. They were startled to read the sign posted outside the enclosure. Just as they were leaving, an idea popped into the mind of one of the boys. He took a piece of chalk from his pocket and altered part of the message. When he finished, the sign read: "two melons in this patch are poisoned." Laughing hilariously, they left. The farmer returned and found himself in a predicament, for now all the melons were unsafe for use, for he could not be sure which of the melons the boys had contaminated.

Is it interestingly possible that both sides of the current issue under discussion (sin and forgiveness) have made a similar mistake? By agreeing that one of the "spiritual melons" in the Garden of God's Word was not true, they have made a fatal blunder. One says that the "every sin must be repented of and confessed" position is a "yo-yo" religion. The other says that the automatic cleansing of the "even as

you sin" position gives a false assurance to the Christian as he sins. There is confusion. Who is right? In the story, however, neither the farmer nor the gang of boys had really poisoned the delicious fruit. The analogy holds true for many Bible subjects. Whoever the false teacher is and whatever he says to make his opponent look ridiculous so that he will look right, still does not change God's Word.

"Boys, when you find yourself wandering in the area of uncertainty, always come back to the stake of what God has said, and you will never believe nor teach false doctrine." God help us to follow the wisdom, experience and judgment of the sage who gave this advice, for it is biblically founded! ---- Via **Guardian of Truth XXIX: 4, pp. 104-106, February 21, 1985**

Excuses for Neglecting the Worship -by Dan King, Antioch, Tn

Many people today are guilty of the sin which the author of the Hebrew epistle condemns his readers for in 10:25 of his letter. He writes: "Not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing night." Many of those people to whom he addressed himself were drawn back to Jewish ways and Jewish things, and so came to place a low value upon worship with other Christians. Clearly this is the case with many folks today; not that they are drawn back to Judaism, but that they place a low value upon worhsip activities because

they place a high value upon things which are worldly and temporal, and yet have no long-term spiritual worth.

Now, when we begin to ask ourselves why we are neglecting the growth of our souls and the worship of our God, we have a list of excuses a mile long. But excuses are just that: attempts at justifying ourselves and exempting us from duty. The Lord must surely see these excuses like the wife did in a story I heard recently. It seems that a certain fellow was a prominent member of a gentleman's club. At the breakfast table he was relating to his wife an incident that occurred at the club the previous evening. The president of the organization had offered a silk hat to the brother who could stand up and truthfully say that during his married life he had never kissed any woman but his own wife. "And, would you believe it Helen? - not a one stood up." "Harry," his wife said, "why didn't you stand up?" "Well," he replied, "I was going to, but I knew I would look awful in a silk hat." Pretty lame, wouldn't you agree? But if you want to hear a few lame excuses, listen to some of these:

1. I Just Don't Feel Good On Sunday. Someone has dubbed this ailment "Sunday morbitis," since it only seems to strike on Sundays. It is a disease which has many different symptoms and only a few similarities. For example, people who are stricken by it always seem to improve on Sunday night so that by Monday morning they can go back to work and not lose any part of their paycheck. Too, you will see them out shopping and present at

all social occasions by Monday.

2. I Had Important Things To Do On Sunday. Wonder how that one sounds to God? IT most certainly puts him and his kingdom down the list from where it ought to be (see **Matt. 6:33**). Was it really more important than being with the people of God and learning about the Son of God?

3. I Just Don't Enjoy Worship Enough To Go Regularly. This sounds more like a self-indictment than an excuse! Of course, all of our likes and dislikes and based upon developed tastes. The right attitude is critical to enjoying anything. Do you come to worship for the right reason? Do you come to be entertained, or to worship and serve your Creator? If you come for entertainment, you are there for the wrong reason! If you come to be coddled or catered to, you are there for the wrong reason! God's people sang his praises and glorified his Name in the sewers and labyrinths beneath ancient Rome, and did so at the risk of persecution and death! Whereas today we must listen to complaints about minor little problems: the temperature in the building, the seats are too hard, the song leader didn't pitch the song correctly, the preacher preached too long, the people were unfriendly (friendliness starts with ME), etc. "I didn't get anything out of that service," should be answered with the question, "Did you put anything into it?" If we would take the attitude of David, we would most assuredly enjoy the worship: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up to the House of the Lord" (**Psa. 122:1**).

4. Once A Week Is Enough. If you will read again **Hebrews 10:25**, you will find that it does not refer to a single assembly, but to "assembling." Early Christians at times met every day (similar to what we do during a gospel meeting or special series of lessons). "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching. . . ." (**Acts 2:42**); and, "Day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple . . ." (**Acts 2:46**). Every child of God who was not hindered by sickness was expected at all the assemblies: "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (**Jas. 4:17**). Brethren have generally found that most everyone can fit in the three services per week that congregations provide. Of course, work obligations limit us in some instances, but, in reality, there are few times when we absolutely must miss even one of these few hours of the week for worship. If one went to all four hours of study and worship provided by the local church, it would take up only 4 out of 168 total hours in the week. Surely we can spare that much time for the Savior who bore the cross to Calvary for us!

5. I'm Only Hurting Myself. Now, there is where you are wrong. A poor example hurts everyone around him or her. It hurts a spouse, who is thereby weakened in faith and resolve to do right. It hurts the children, who are set on the wrong path in life by the patterns we are now putting before them. It hurts relatives and neighbors and friends who see our model and receive encouragement for their own indifference and apathy. We never hurt only ourselves! Jesus said: "Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (**Matt. 5:16**). What kind of light are you shining before the world?

6. One Of These Days I'm Going To Get Started Being Faithful. I heard the story once of a boy, the son of a negligent church member, who was bitten by a rattlesnake. He called the preacher to come over and pray for him. When he showed up, Sam was shocked to hear the preacher pray as follows: "Dear Lord, please send more and bigger snakes to bite Jim, and Pete, and the old man too!" What we all need is "more and bigger" of whatever it takes to shake us out of our lethargy. God does not guarantee that we will have a tomorrow to start being what we need to be and doing what we need to do. "Today is the day of salvation" (**2 Cor. 6:2**). God wants us faithful all the time so that we will be found faithful at the end of time (**Rev.2:10**)! Now is the time to get started on the road to faithfulness!

Stop making lame-sounding excuses that are aimed at "excusing us from duty." If they sound ridiculous to others, then they no doubt sound so to God who knows the hearts of men. Stop playing games with your soul. Heaven is too wonderful to miss, and Hell too horrible to hit! And, please be assured dear reader, the Judge of all the earth knows the difference between a reason and an excuse. If you don't believe it, read **Luke 14:16-21**. ---- **Via Guardian of Truth XXXVI: 5, pp. 142-143., March 5, 1992**