

Wanted

**DEAD
BANK ROBBERS**

\$5,000 Reward

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Times have surely changed during the 20th century! This could be illustrated in many ways, not the least by our society's attitude toward crime and one's right to protect himself and his property against criminals.

Some of us can remember a time when no jury would convict someone for stopping a violent crime in progress even if the criminal lost his life. Today it's no wonder people don't want to "get involved" in protecting the innocent against criminals when courts are likely to punish the crimestopper and free the evildoer.

No, it wasn't always that way in our nation. In April, 1930, the Texas Bankers' Association began offering a reward for dead bank robbers. You read that right—*dead* bank robbers! The reward poster offered a standing reward of \$5,000* for each bank robber legally killed while robbing an Association member bank.

The only other condition was that the robber(s) had to be using a firearm to commit the act. The flyer promoting the reward further explained: "The Association will not give one cent for live bank robbers. They are rarely identified, more rarely convicted and most rarely stay in the penitentiary when sent there...all of which operations are troublesome, burdensome and costly to the government."

The reward was discontinued in 1964, during a decade noted for moral decline as well as resistance to law and order. That was about the same time when courts began to yield to the pressures from so-called "peace" activists and other "leftists" to dismantle deterrence to crime. Thus the government left its God-mandated mission to "punish evildoers" (1 Pet. 2:14).

Lest anyone think that a loving God would not consider armed robbery to be worthy of death, perhaps it would be good to compare it with the list of sins He considers "worthy of death" (Rom. 1:29-32).

*According to the the U.S. government's inflation calculator, \$5,000 in 1930 would be the equivalent to over \$43,000 today.

**THINK
ON THESE THINGS**

Philippians 4:8

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Honoring Godly Discipline

By AL DIESTELKAMP

We living in an undisciplined era. Courts are reluctant to inflict punishment due malefactors in fear that a higher court will reverse a sentence on the basis of it being "cruel and unusual." Police are afraid to use much force to subdue lawbreakers lest they be charged with brutality. Many parents have swallowed the "psycobabble" so prevalent and coddle rebellious children. It is especially socially incorrect to spank children.

In such an environment it is disappointing, but not surprising, that the discipline of unfaithful brothers and sisters in Christ has been greatly neglected. I fear that in this matter many among us have been "conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). Even when a congregation musters up the spiritual fortitude to withdraw from one who is "walking disorderly" (2 Thess. 3:6), the desired effect is diminished by a minority who fail to honor the "punishment which was inflicted by the majority" (2 Cor. 2:6).

The purpose of corrective discipline is that the person "may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5). That is a noble motive, and better than the Holy Spirit knows how to accomplish that goal? Yet, the lament is heard, "You'll just drive them further away if you withdraw from them." This attitude manifests a lack of faith in the word of God.

As a result of our failure to "speak the same thing" (1 Cor. 1:10) on this subject,

some Christians feel empowered to ignore the command to "not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed" (2 Thess. 3:14). Others will go to great lengths to make sure that they don't "eat with such a person" (1 Cor. 5:11), but will "keep company" in other ways.

This problem is magnified among those who are related to the disciplined Christian. It is *assumed* (though not revealed) that when a member of our own physical family is disciplined that we can continue our social association as usual. This, I fear, has the effect of placing the physical relationship on a higher level than the spiritual relationship.

Christians who have a family member who has turned his back on the Lord have a heavy burden to bear. We are reminded that if we love father, mother, son or daughter more than the Lord, we are "not worthy" of Him (Matt. 10:37). Jesus compared this to the cross He had to bear by saying, "He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:38).

If we really believe the Lord knows best, when we have a loved one who has resisted correction and needs discipline, we will insist that the church do what is best for him. Then we will join with other brothers and sister in Christ to take away from him what he desires most—our approval and association. If we who are closest to him fail to honor the withdrawal, we have removed a powerful incentive for his salvation and make him a victim of undiscipline.

*"He who loves
father or mother
more than Me is
not worthy of Me.
And He who loves
son or daughter
more than Me is
not worthy of
Me."*

—Matt. 10:37

MOVING BOUNDARIES

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

This past Fall a friendly controversy began as a result of our efforts to improve the driveway by the church building. Our neighbors to the north got the impression that our gravel driveway had shifted over the years and was actually overlapping onto their property. Their curiosity got the best of them, and I found them digging into the gravel in our driveway one morning. “What are you looking for?” I politely asked. They explained that they had done some measuring and were guessing that there was a metal landmark placed in the ground there. They had dug down a few inches through the gravel and had found nothing. Later in the day I found them with a rented metal detector and a deeper hole in our driveway. Sure enough, there it was, a metal landmark. The controversy was over, the end of all dispute. Our driveway had widened by about two feet over the years. What was amazing to me was that a rusty piece of metal had two parties staring at it in total agreement as to what it meant.

The following day was a work day at the building and the easiest solution to the problem was to dig that landmark up and move it two feet to the north. Problem fixed! But



that’s not what we did because that would have been unethical, illegal and just plain wrong. If we had moved that marker and been caught by the authorities we would have been written up in the local newspaper, prosecuted and fined. It is wrong to move a landmark! Isn’t it amazing to think about how unanimous the decision against us would have been.

The Law of Moses was not just the spiritual law of Israel, but it was also their civil law. God legislated against the moving of

landmarks and equated it with stealing (Deut. 19:14; 27:17; Job 24:2; Prov. 22:28; 23:10).

God’s word is authoritative. When mere men begin tampering with His landmarks we are treading on holy ground.

What a story it would have been for the newspaper if I had moved that landmark! The outcry, the condemnation, the charge of hypocrisy that would have been heard if I had moved that landmark. My defense for such action? It’s just an old rusty piece of metal. It was put there a long time ago. Times have changed! Who’s to say that its the standard? Anybody could have put that there.

No court and no community would accept such a lame defense. Guilty! Yet, if men or churches want to move God’s landmarks there is little objection. What kind of defense do we hear? It’s just an old ancient myth. It was written a long time ago. Times change! Who’s to say that its the standard? Anybody could have written that!

Which landmark is more sacred, more holy: the city’s or God’s? We answer that by the reaction we have to their movement.

Moral relativism is like our drifting driveway. Ignore, misplace, forget or remove God’s landmarks and suddenly we can’t draw any lines. Proof of this is seen in the issues being debated today. Is sucking the brains out of a nearly delivered baby a protected right? Should there be homosexual marriage? Is consensual pedophilia ok?

The problem is that the standard is disregarded and covered by hardened hearts that are ever-widening in their toleration. Even when some dig to find the standard and show it to the world it is ignored as obsolete, unreliable, and some just boldly move the standards.

Shall I charge our neighbors with hate because they pointed out the landmark in our driveway? That is exactly what some do when we point to scripture to show what it says about homosexuality, fornication, divorce, remarriage, etc. (Matt. 19:9; Rom. 1:24-32; 1 Cor. 6:9,10). People read that and just pull up the landmark and move it two feet north. No problem.

From moral issues to the plain teaching of Christ and His apostles on salvation some are left scratching their heads and wondering just where that landmark is, while most just don’t bother to dig trusting that a loving God would not mind us widening the driveway.

How indignant we can become when anyone tampers with landmarks set by men. How apathetic we are when God’s landmarks are ignored. Give honor where honor is due. Honor God’s landmarks.

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Girding the Towel

By **AL DIESTELKAMP**

Whenever the story of Jesus girding Himself with a towel and washing the feet of His disciples (Jn. 13) is discussed, the inevitable question is whether or not Jesus was requiring foot-washing as an act of obedience to Him.

It is usually noted (I believe correctly) that Jesus was teaching the principle that we need to be humble enough to serve, even to the point of doing what is expected of a slave. His point was that if He, as Lord, was willing to perform a menial service to benefit those who are clearly subservient to Him, that we ought to be willing to do the same for one another.

Therefore, if we find one who needs his feet washed, we should not be too proud to do so. The traveling conditions and dress of our time has lessened the need for frequent foot-washing. Therefore, we look for other ways to fulfill the mandate of Jesus to “do as I have done” (Jn. 13:15).

As a child I relied on my father to do many things for me, but as I got older—and especially as he became aged—the less I expected him to serve my needs, and the more I looked for ways to help him. However, I’m reminded of a time when my father demonstrated to me—in a vivid way—his grasp of Jesus’ teaching on the subject of serving others.

I was on my way to preach in a series of gospel meetings when I stopped at my father’s home for a visit. In the course of the visit I mentioned that I had neglected to polish my dress shoes before leaving home. Suddenly Dad got up from his chair, disappeared into another room, only to return carrying a shoe shine kit. He laid some newspaper under my feet and started to shine my shoes.

“I’ll do that,” I protested.

“No you won’t! I want to do it,” he insisted.

And so I sat and watched as my aged father knelt before me to perform an act of humble service to me.

Your Late-in-Life Repentance

By RICK LIGGIN

The Amorites who had previously possessed the land of Canaan had been an extremely corrupt people—so corrupt, in fact, that God had driven them out of the land in order to give it to His own people, the nation of Israel. But now, some five hundred or more years later, under the influence of one man, the southern kingdom in Israel (Judah) had become even more corrupt than the Amorites had ever been. Who was this one man that so terribly influenced Judah? It was King Manasseh.

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king of Judah, and his reign lasted for fifty-five years. We are told that “he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord dispossessed before the sons of Israel” (2 Ki. 21:2). The list of his sins is repulsive—even to those who may not care much about God. He involved himself in all types of idolatrous worship, including that of human sacrifice; he even made some of his own sons “pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom” (2 Chron. 33:6). Furthermore, he shed so much innocent blood that Jerusalem was said to have been filled with it “from one

end to another” (2 Ki. 21:16). And worst of all, Manasseh encouraged the entire nation to become immoral: we are told that he “seduced them to do *evil more than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the sons of Israel*” (2 Ki. 21:9). In consequence of his sins, God caused Manasseh to be led away with hooks, bound in chains, into Assyrian captivity (2 Chron. 33:11).

Then Manasseh repented! Yes, believe it or not, in captivity he actually humbled himself greatly before Jehovah and begged for God’s mercy (2 Chron. 33:12-13). So genuine was his repentance that God actually allowed him to return to Jerusalem to finish his reign. And when he returned to Jerusalem, he followed through with his repentance by removing all the idols, restoring the true worship of God, and by ordering the nation to serve Jehovah again (2 Chron. 33:14-16).

But sadly, Manasseh’s own repentance had no effect on the heart of his son, nor did it change the heart of the nation in general. The many years of his wicked influence simply had too strong a hold on the people. Evidence for this is rather clear: when Manasseh died, we are told that “Amon his son became king in his place...and *he did evil*

in the sight of the Lord *as Manasseh his father had done*” (2 Chron. 33:20-22). Though Manasseh, himself, had a change of heart, his late-in-life repentance could not undo all the awful damage already done by his previous involvement in depraved wickedness.

Isn’t there a lesson in all of this for us? Most assuredly there is! When you choose to spend a good portion of your life actively pursuing wicked and licentious deeds, do not be surprised if it tragically affects others around you. Your refusal to do right *will* influence others—including your own family! And even though you may repent later on in life, you cannot undo the damage you have already done! Yes, some may follow your lead and turn from their sins too. But scores of others will never even know of your repentance, and almost certainly will never change. And oh how broken your heart will be, if some of the casualties turn out to be members of your own family—maybe even your own children! Now is the time to put a stop to any evil influence you may be on others. Later on in life may be too late!

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‘Today You Will Be With Me in Paradise’

By AL DIESTELKAMP

These words of Jesus (Lk. 23:43) as he hung on the cross have long been misused by proponents of the “salvation by faith alone” heresy. After they have exhausted every other attempt to nullify the necessity of baptism for salvation, they resort to, “What about the thief on the cross?”

They’re quick to point out that here was one who was saved without baptism. Of course, this argument has not “stumped” us, as they would suppose. The fact that the thief lived and died before the gospel was in effect should settle that dispute.

Occasionally brethren will deny that the thief was really saved, noting that Jesus didn’t actually say that he was. I beg to differ. Salvation is implied when the thief was assured that he would be with Jesus. If ever there was a *necessary* inference, this is one, and it is that the thief was saved.

I’ve always thought it “curious” at best when people say that they want to be saved

like a thief! That would be like saying, “I want to be rich like Al Capone.” Wouldn’t it be more noble to say, “I want to be saved like prayerful Lydia?”

Be that as it may, I have learned to respond to the “thief” argument by agreeing that you can be saved just like the thief on the cross.

The thief was not the first to be saved without baptism. Jesus on other occasions spoke people’s sins forgiven. He had that authority.

He spoke the sins forgiven of the paralytic man who was let down through the roof (Matt. 9:2). He did the same for a sinful woman (Lk. 7:48). On another occasion when one asked what to do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to “Sell all you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Lk. 18:22). Isn’t it strange that we don’t hear of people saying they want to be saved in the way Jesus told the rich young ruler to be saved?

So the thief, the sinful woman and the

paralytic were all saved by the word of Christ. And if you and I are saved, it also will be by the word of Christ. Since Jesus isn’t physically here on earth speaking people’s sins forgiven, we must rely on His *written* word. He said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mk. 16:16).

Furthermore, after the apostles received the Holy Spirit, He told them, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them” (Jn. 20:23). These men, directed by the Holy Spirit, when asked what was needed to be saved, told people to “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Ac. 2:38).

The thief was saved by the word of Christ. The word of Christ tells men today to believe in Him (Jn. 3:18); to repent (Lk. 13:3); to confess faith in Him (Matt. 10:32); and to be baptized (Mk. 16:16).

Which of the above words of Christ does man have a right to say is not necessary for salvation?

The Last Page of the Century

By AL DIESTELKAMP

I know, I know! Most people have bought into the notion that January 1, 2000, marked the end of the 20th century and the beginning of a new millenium, but we know better. Since those who developed our calendar chose to designate the first year as 1, A.D. (not 0, A.D.), the completion of the second millenium has to be the end—not the beginning—of year 2000.

In a way, I guess that makes me a “pre-millennialist.”

Therefore, for this publication, this represents the last page of the century (as well as the millenium). Permit me to “ramble” a bit.

Last year when most people couldn’t wait for the *real* new millenium there were all kinds of predictions of chaos—none of which came to pass. This year no one was expecting anything unusual, but (at least here in the U.S.) the end of this year has proven to be much more unsettling.

Who would have predicted that weeks after the national elections that the news media and political pundits still could not give reasonable assurance as to who will be the next President of the United States? Even as I’m writing this article (on December 9) the “roller coaster” is taking its turns and dips.

Hopefully, by the time you receive this paper we will know who is expected to take the oath of office on January 20. I have a pretty strong opinion as to who this should be, but I won’t pursue that matter here. Barring some greater crisis, whoever is the next occupant of the White House—be it George W. Bush, Al Gore or Dennis Hastert—life as we know it will not be much different.

Occasionally, when I am fretting about

the uncertainty of the situation, I am reminded that God is still in ultimate control. Whoever God chooses to put in power will be the next President (see Dan. 2.21; Rom. 13:1).

Even my persuasive arguments as to who would be better able to remove some of the reproach that sin has brought upon our nation (Prov. 14:34) might not convince God to choose my candidate. He might, instead, choose to give us what we (as a nation) deserve. A look into the Old Testament will show God has a “track record” of punishing rebellious nations—sometimes even using wicked men as His instruments.

There can be no comfort in the fact that we can point to other nations more wicked than America. We have been so richly blessed by God! He has every reason to expect more from us than from nations who have not been so blessed.

The approaching end of the 20th century called to mind a time when I was a child, before I could do the math, asking my mother what age I would be in the 21st century. She told me I would be almost 60 years old. I remember wondering if I would live to be *so* old.

For some reason 60 doesn’t seem that old anymore. Nevertheless, I am also reminded of the biblical statement that we “do not know what will happen tomorrow,” for life “is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (Jas. 4:14).

So, though I don’t know who will be President, or whether I will live or die, or when the Lord will come to bring an end to this world, I do know that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

What a comfort in a time of uncertainty!



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THINK

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