

## Death to the Enemy

I once read a story of an ancient emperor who vowed to slay all his enemies who engaged in a certain insurrection. Later he offered a pardon to all of them.

On being taken to task for breaking his word, he declared, "I have kept my word, for they are no longer my enemies, but have been transformed into my friends."

The King of kings and Lord of lords will certainly destroy his enemies—except those of us who accept his pardon and become his friends (Rom. 6:23).

—Al Diestelkamp

# THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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## ‘... But Even if She Does ...’

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Today, when divorce is so prevalent both in the church as well as in society, there is a temptation to find loopholes in the New Testament's instructions so as to allow for divorce for reasons other than fornication. Even among those who reject attempts to justify remarriage in many or most cases, there is the notion that it isn't sinful to divorce, even when one's partner has not been unfaithful, as long as there is no intention to marry again.

The question is often posed like this: "May a woman divorce her husband for any reason as long as she doesn't marry anyone else?" This question is only slightly different from the one posed by the Pharisees as they tried to "test" Jesus: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any cause?" (Matt. 19:3). When we see Jesus' answer (vss. 4-6, 8-9) we find him telling them, in other words, "No, except it be for fornication." On a previous occasion Jesus had taught that "whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery." From these teachings we must conclude that it is a sin to divorce one's spouse (except for fornication) even if he is able to remain celibate the rest of his life, because: (1) Man is separating what God has joined; (2) It will likely cause his partner to marry another, which would be adultery.

But many are now asking, what about Paul's "But even if she does" statement (1 Cor. 7:11)? Some suggest Paul is implying that there are other reasons for divorce, and that he is reminding them that if they exercise that option they must "remain unmarried or be reconciled." On the surface this may sound logical, but it requires a "leap" to a conclusion not consistent with the context.

First of all, I would be embarrassed to claim that Paul is approving of people *doing* what he had just said the Lord commanded them *not* to do: "A wife is not to depart from her husband." It may be a safe conclusion that Paul is recognizing the fact that some were not going to obey this command, but it is a giant assumption to say that he was giving authority for them to do it. He didn't say it would be *better* if one did not leave his spouse; He said "I *command*, yet not I but the Lord..." (italics for emphasis is mine—ad).

### Reasons For the 'But'

Why then, did Paul use the "But even if she does" statement? I can think of at least two situations people can find themselves in which they would need this "but even if" instruction: (1) Someone who, beyond his control, was *forced* "to depart." For instance, a wife who realizes she must "obey God rather than man" may be forced "to depart" from a husband who requires her participation in his sin. Also, men and women who have been sold into slavery may be *forced* "to depart." These people need to know that they cannot marry another; (2) There are people who don't care what God's law says, and may go ahead and divorce. "But even if" they do, God wants them to know that to marry another would be compounding the sin. One does not have to be a Christian to be subject to God's laws concerning marriage. Later in life such a one may want to do what is right. If reconciliation is possible, that is the route to take, but when it is not (the other partner may not cooperate), then he must remain unmarried.

### What About Abuse?

When discussing this issue, people always ask about a woman who is married to a man who physically abuses her. We all

have genuine sympathy for one in such a circumstance. Our emotions may cause us to want to find a way out for her, but we are not at liberty to prescribe divorce. A woman who is in such a situation may need to get help to stop the abuse, but often the only help she gets is advice to divorce.

After discussing physical abuse, many want to extend their argument to appeal to our emotions concerning mental abuse as well. While there is no denying that many people are guilty of abusing their marriage partners, and that it is wrong to do so, it still must be said that such is *not* scriptural grounds for divorce. It should also be noted that alot of what is being called "mental cruelty" by so-called marriage and behavior "experts" is a result of our culture's departure from God's order of things. Any woman who has a husband who expects her to be submissive to him, can easily convince a judge that her husband is abusive. Again, let me say, for either partner to mentally abuse the other, is sin! But it is not the sin of fornication, which is the only scriptural reason one can divorce.

If the abuser (whether physical or mental) claims to be a Christian, the spouse, after trying to reason with him, needs to ask one or two other Christians to confront him with his sin, and if he won't listen to them, she should "tell it to the church" and if he won't listen to the church, *then* he is to be treated as a heathen (unbeliever) (Matt. 18:15-17).

Given the fact that the divorce rate among members of the church is approaching the national rate, and that brothers and sisters are divorcing with little or no action taken by local congregations, I am surprised to find that the Lord's church still has a reputation for strong opposition to divorce. I'm not ashamed of the reputation, but I have to wonder if we deserve it.

# Hezekiah's Restoration

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

The Scriptures reveal many examples of faithful men who persevered in life. These historic figures and their stories can provide a foundation for our own faith in God. They exemplify what kind of people and actions are pleasing to God.

One such figure is King Hezekiah of Judah. His father, King Ahaz, had allowed the nation of Judah to drift into the worship of false gods. Some of this worship even involved the sacrifice of children. Ahaz destroyed many of the articles of the temple and shut it down. He encouraged moral decline in Judah and was continually unfaithful to Jehovah. So, after sixteen years of leading the nation into apostasy and lawlessness, his son, Hezekiah, was given the throne. What takes place in the first year of his reign is one of the greatest restorations to the ways of God on record. He did what was right in the sight of Jehovah. Perhaps by looking at this restoration, we can see some principles necessary to restoring Christianity in our time to what God intends for it to be.

A major principle we learn from Hezekiah is that we must first admit our past errors. We find Hezekiah admitting that their fathers had done evil in the sight of God (2 Chron. 29:4-9). They had turned their backs on God. The Children of Israel had been warned by God when they had originally received the Law of Moses that if they did not obey they would be cursed (Deut. 28:15). So, Hezekiah understood that God was no longer pleased with them as a nation. It takes a special person to own up to the mistakes of the past.

Are we willing to do the same? Christianity as a world religion and culture is a broad term in today's society. Depending on who is using it, it can encompass everything from the Branch Davidian sect to Roman Catholicism. The doctrines of those who might be classified under this umbrella are quite varied. Today, tradition seems to carry as much authority as Scripture. Denominationalism, for instance, is completely foreign to God's word; however, the world seems to treat it as completely acceptable and a fundamental cog in "Christianity." A present day restoration will require all of us to take a long, hard look at our beliefs and actions and compare them with the New Testament.

Another major principle that we learn from Hezekiah's restoration is that we must be willing to change. In the first year of Hezekiah's reign he got to work (2 Chron. 29:1-3). Sixteen years of neglecting God were changed in about sixteen days (vs. 17). If in our self-examination we observe in-

consistencies between our practices and the teachings of God's word, we had better change. Denominationalism is just a fancy word for division. Jesus' desire was for unity. How can we sanction denominationalism any more than Hezekiah could sanction idolatry?

Hezekiah was excited about getting the restoration message preached: Return to Jehovah and He will return to you; Don't be like your fathers and your brethren who sinned against God; Don't be rebellious, but submit to God and serve Him; Return and God will be merciful (see 2 Chron. 30). Unfortunately, many laughed at, and scorned this restoration plea. However, some humbled themselves and returned. We too, need to return to God's ways and not continue in man's ways. Yes, many will scoff at such an idea today just as they did

in Hezekiah's day. Let's not be shocked by a rejection of this plea to return to the Bible. Let's just resolve to press on.

One final phase of Hezekiah's restoration process was the discarding of the many false ways. The initial resolution to restore was accomplished quickly, but the actual giving up of error took some time. We must also hate every false way (Psa. 119:97-104). Let us be patient and longsuffering with one another as we unload our worldly baggage, but let us never compromise the truth of God's word.

Restoration to the pattern of the New Testament should interest us? We must pursue service to God according to His word and not according to the traditions of men. After all, it is not men that we are seeking to please, but Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:10). Now is the time for restoration!

## The Ancient Church in a Modern World

By LESLIE DIESTELKAMP

The Lord's church had its beginning more than 1900 years ago in the city of Jerusalem (Ac. 2:41,47). Saved souls were added to it then, which clearly indicates that it was an existing body. The church had actually come with the giving of the Holy Spirit (Ac. 2:4) on that same day. Thereafter it was reproduced in all parts of the world by the preaching and teaching of the gospel of Christ.

Today, in this modern world, it must be reproduced by the very same means. If any other means is used, that which is produced will not be the true church for which Jesus died. Furthermore, if those who are added to that one body today do not work and worship as the Christians did 1900 years ago, they will make that religion which they profess something more or less than the religion of Jesus Christ.

We hear much about "twentieth century Christianity," as though the religion of our day would be something distinctive and different from the religion of other centuries. However, it needs to be remembered that if today's religion is not indeed *first century Christianity*, then it is not Christianity at all. If the preaching and teaching that produced our religion was not the ancient gospel without addition, subtraction or substitution, then we are not members of that ancient church purchased on Golgotha's hill, and we are yet in our sins.

If the worship and work in which we engage today is not identical in nature to

that practiced by the apostles and their contemporaries then we have departed from the faith and are again lost as erring children of God. We must not try to harmonize truth to our modern ways and means, but instead we must conform our ways and means with the ancient gospel so perfectly and fully revealed in the New Testament.

### Recommended Reading

## WHEN CHOICE BECOMES GOD

"How far will we let Pro-Choice go before we take a stand?" is a question posed by F. LaGard Smith, in his book, *When Choice Becomes God*. The author, a law professor at Pepperdine University, points out that "In the minds of a Pro-Choice generation, choice has become the supreme right—and the right to choose has become God."

This book, which on the surface is attacking the abortion issue in our society, also deals with how our demand for "Choice" has changed our attitudes about other moral issues—such as divorce. It is well written, in a style that makes it easy to read and understand.

The 271 page book is available in paperback at a cost of \$10.95 (plus postage) from Ferris Books, 855 E. 11th St., Lockport, IL 60441; (815) 834-0720.



# Clothes Make the Man, Right?

By ED BRAND

Wrong! Styles of clothing come and go. Some people slavishly follow the high priests of fashion and wear whatever is offered on the altar of "fashion." Their dress reflects the shiny trends of the cultured crowd. At the other end of the couture spectrum are the "protestants" who will not be told what they will wear in order to be culturally correct. They are represented by the hippies, rock musicians, academia and some in the scientific community who just don't seem to care about their appearance.

Most of us are somewhere in between this crowd of extremists. We do care what we look like, and we do care what others think about the way we dress (I hope).

When you get up on Sunday morning, how do you decide what you are going to wear to worship the Creator of the universe and the Savior of souls? Do you spend more time considering what you wear to school, or to work, or to play? Should you be more careful about what is worn to the church house than what is worn to the school house or the work house?

Not necessarily. I do not think God requires special "church" clothes which are used on Sundays and Wednesdays. (Of course, some think preachers should wear clothing which reflects their work, or "position," at all times.) However, even though ecclesiastical garments are not required to worship God, is it true that whatever is worn is . . . immaterial? T-shirts (with or without logos, pictures, statements, etc.), jeans, shorts, sweat suits; the everyday accouterments of the laid-back 90's. I've seen all of the above in assemblies called for the purpose of worship, and so have you, unless you are blind.

Surprisingly, the New Testament says

*ED BRAND preaches for the Westside church in Aurora, Illinois.*

little, content-wise, about clothing. Only one passage actually speaks directly about the subjects of apparel and modesty, but it speaks volumes. Read 1 Tim. 2:9-10: "women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety . . ." Paul instructs godly women (all of our sisters ought to be godly) to put on clothes which are modest ("moderated, unpretentious; observing the proprieties of sex, chaste, decent"—*Webster*). The putting on of such clothing is to arise from a sense of "shamefastness" (ASV) which means "reverence . . . having regard for others" (*Thayer*), and in a dread of something shameful (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*). This surely does not describe a "godly" woman who rises in anger when anyone questions the modesty and appropriateness of her clothing. Rather than spending much time and patience using a ruler to judge how far below the knees dresses must come, or how far below the shoulders the neckline may plunge, it would be better to try to induce a sense of shamefastness and reverence in the heart. Of course, it is always easier to modify outward behavior than educate and tenderize the heart. (Parents, while you are trying to do the latter, you may have to enforce the former.) Our ladies need to be aware that their clothing is speaking more loudly than their mouths about the content of the hearts.

And now my brothers, for you. Five sentences later (1 Tim. 3:2), Paul says that a bishop "must be . . . orderly." This is the same word used to modify "apparel" in 2:9. This man is to be "respectable, honorable." He is to be a modest person. Men and women should give due consideration to the impression their apparel makes upon others. God can tell what is in my heart, for He has the ability to read my thoughts. Our fellows have to use their eyes to determine our shamefastness and reverence.

# GRASSHOPPERS AND A SLING

By DENNIS ALLAN

Our ability to overcome obstacles in serving God depends upon our trust in Him. Two incidents from the Old Testament illustrate this point vividly.

## "We Were As Grasshoppers"

That was the cry of the ten spies who talked most of the Israelites out of taking the promised land of Canaan. They saw the land God had reserved for them, but they also saw the obstacle—the mighty people who lived in Canaan. They convinced themselves that they could not be victorious over these "men of great stature." Showing no trust in God's might, these men could see only their own inadequacy as they announced: "We were in our own sight as grasshoppers" (Num. 13:32-33). These faithless men with a "grasshopper complex" never reached the promised land.

## "His Sling Was In His Hand"

Some generations later, a young man named David faced one of the giants of the land of Canaan, a Philistine named Goliath. David saw an army of Israelite "grasshoppers" shrink from Goliath's challenges. David refused the armor and weapons of a soldier and chose to withstand Goliath with only a sling . . . and his trust in God. David had no fear of losing to keep him back, so he boldly faced and defeated his mighty enemy. Unlike the cowardly spies four centuries earlier, David trusted in God. As he faced Goliath, he said, "This day will Jehovah deliver thee into my hand" (1 Sam. 17:46).

David realized what we must also recognize: Our obstacles may be giants to us, but they are as grasshoppers in God's eyes!

*DENNIS ALLAN, presently of Rochelle, Illinois, will soon move his family to Brazil where he will preach and teach.*

# EQUALITY OF THE LORD'S WAYS

By LOWELL BLASINGAME

God told Israel that His ways were equal—that if a righteous man turned to iniquity and died in it, his righteousness would be forgotten and he would perish in his iniquity. However, if a wicked man turned from his wickedness and did right, his former wickedness would be forgotten and he would live (Ezk. 18:21-32).

God's ways are still equal. Man becomes a sinner, not by inheriting the guilt of Adam's sin, but by sinning! Sin is a transgression of God's law (1 Jn. 3:4), or a failure to do right (Jas. 5:17). Hence, a man becomes a sinner by failing to do what is right or by breaking God's law, not by the transferal of Adam's sin to him.

The same is true of man's being made righteous in the sight of the Lord. Paul declares the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin (Rom. 4:8) and identifies him as the person "whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered" (Rom. 4:6-7), not as the person to whom the righteousness of Christ is transferred. A forgiven person is a righteous person.

Calvinism makes a farce out of the equality of God by imputing Adam's sin to make us guilty, and Christ's perfect obedience to make us righteous. The Bible teaches neither. It teaches that by our disobedience to His word we are indicted and become sinners, and by our obedience to His word we are forgiven and made righteous (Heb. 5:8-9). The Lord's ways are still equal.

*LOWELL BLASINGAME preaches in Pine Bluff, Arkansas and edits THE BUCKLER, a church bulletin from which we copied this article.*

# BROTHER AFAR

HAPPENINGS IN EASTERN EUROPE By AL DIESTELKAMP

Even though I'm not "afar," I have gleaned from various letters and reports the following items of interest:

## Bratislava, Slovakia

The David Diestelkamp and Rick Liggin families have been able to rent a large house in Bratislava. The house, which is more modern than most housing there, is arranged in such a way that both families are able to live in it. The basement, which has a separate entrance, is very suitable as a meetingplace for the church.

Now that they have become better acquainted with the people and the city, their work is going better and better all the time. They report having good results in getting appointments with people for Bible studies by setting up a small table with religious materials and signs on it in the centrum (city center). They have had difficulty finding good Slovak-English translators, but late reports indicate they have found a couple of competent translators who are willing to work with them in personal studies.

Rick and David are also helping with the work in Brno, a Czech city an hour and forty minutes away by train. They go there on Sunday evenings and stay over until the next day for studies with five or six people.

## Sofia, Bulgaria

Lonnie Fritz, Joe Rose, David Hawthorne and their families are currently working in Sofia, Bulgaria. That work has been in progress for over a year, and these good families are planning to stay there at least one or two more years.

## Budapest, Hungary

After a two year work in Budapest, Hungary, the Jeff Archer and Richard Copeland families have returned to the U.S. Since they were the first brethren in Budapest, their pioneer work

has been very difficult, but they have given many people a chance to hear the gospel, and they have laid a foundation which will make it easier for other preachers to go there.

To date, six Hungarians have been baptized into Christ. Continuing in the work there is the Lynn Trapp family. They will soon be joined there by the David Bunting family.

## Bucharest, Romania

The David Teel family has been working in Bucharest, Romania for some time, but will return home in July when the Kerry Keenan family will go there. In August the Buddy Payne family will also go to help in that difficult work.

## Czech Republic

From all reports, the church in Prague seems to be "maturing." Real spiritual growth has taken place among the Czech Christians. The church is fully supporting Míra Vokál to preach and teach in České Budejovice. The David Hartsell family returned to the U.S. the last week in June after a year of fruitful work with the church in Prague. Charlie and Maria Brackett will continue there another year. Mike Morrow also continues to teach the gospel there. The church recently invited Dale Smelser to go there for a month to hold two lecture series (one on Catholicism and the other on Evolution).

Johnny Felker and Raymond Harville spent six weeks this Spring helping to strengthen the church in Pardubice. They had spent six weeks there last year at which time they helped to establish the church in that city.

Jim & Bobbie Smelser plan to return to the Czech Republic this coming Fall for at least one year. They previously spent six months working there with Prague as their base. This time they plan to live in České Budejovice. Lonnie & Amanda Oldag have recently returned to the U.S. after working there more than a year.

## Success Story

Tears of joy came to my eyes when I read in a report that Miroslav Hojny was baptized. I immediately recognized the name as one of the people who took two correspondence courses while I was in Prague. I remember how that he answered almost every question correctly. He lived in a distant city and was still taking one of the courses when I left the country. In April he traveled to Prague in search for the truth. He studied with Charlie Brackett for about five hours and was baptized later that very evening. It just shows once again what we should already know—that we need to sow the "seed" as far and wide as we can, for if it reaches good hearts, it will bear fruit.

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# THINK

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