

THE WASTE OF WORRY

By Mark Lindley

Time is a precious blessing not to be wasted. With each tick of the clock the brief span of time we have in this world is passing. This is why Paul exhorts us to use our time wisely: "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:16.) We should "number our days," making the most of each moment, living life to the fullest. (Psalm 90:12.)

Perhaps nothing hinders a proper use of time more than the futile exercise of worry. To worry is to "afflict with mental distress or agitation: make anxious." (Webster's.) Worry goes far beyond reasonable concern. To worry is to be anxious or fretful.

Everyone, at some point, will have to deal with the temptation to worry. Many cares and concerns burden our minds. We may worry about our children, finances, health, marriage, and a thousand other things. But worrying wastes time and accomplishes nothing!

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave some powerful principles regarding worry. He asked, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature." (Matthew 6:27.) The "cubit" of Scripture was roughly 22 inches, from the elbow to the end of the middle finger. It is apparent that one cannot increase his or her height by worrying about it. God, by the process of biology, determines the "cubits" of each person's height. This is out of our control. In this same way, the vast majority of our worries are beyond our control. Worrying will never improve one's finances, health or marriage. Worry will never help your children make wise choices. In fact, worry will never do one thing positive for you. But it will waste your time!

Jesus teaches us to "take no thought" for our lives or for tomorrow. (Matthew 6:25,34.) Since God knows our needs, He will provide. He takes care of the birds and the lilies; surely

He can and will take care of all who seek Him. (Matthew 6:26,28,30.) Rather than spending our time worrying, we should spend our time seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. (Matthew 6:33.)

If worry has become a problem in your life, break the cycle today. Realize that time is quickly passing. Begin looking to God. Seek Him through a study of His Word, the Bible. Put Him first in your life. Trust His promises, obey His will, and He will take care of you! He promised His people: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5.)

— Ripley, MS

OF CRABS AND HUMANS

By Ron Stough

I once read the story of a young boy sleeping beside his basket of freshly-caught crabs. A passerby awakened him and told him his crabs were climbing up the sides to get away. "Mister," said the boy, "You don't know crabs! Just about the time one crab is ready to crawl out, all the other crabs start dragging him back down."

Isn't that the way human beings act sometimes? They try to drag down those around them. Often their actions are prompted by envy. When a person resents the good fortune of another he will too often criticize, slander, and attack in order to pull the successful person back down.

Envy and cruelty go hand in hand. Proverbs 27:4 tells us "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?" The cruelty suffered by Joseph from the hands of his own brothers was the

result of envy. "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him." (Acts 7:9.)

In fact, envy is credited with the most heinous crime of all time - the death of the Son of God. In Matthew 27:18 Pilate recognized the reason the people had delivered Jesus over to him: "For he knew that for envy they delivered Him."

Envy's companions are dark and sinful as well. Titus 3:3 speaks of "malice and envy"; Galatians 5:21 mentions "murder and envy"; and Romans 13:13 talks of "strife and envying."

Envy destroys innocent people, but it ends up making the envious man miserable as well. Proverbs 14:30 says, "A sound heart is the life of the flesh; but envy the rottenness of the bones."

Let's make sure that envy is not a part of our thinking, and that we are pulling others up from the depths of sin rather than back down into it.

— Duncan, OK

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a.) "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous." (1 Peter 3:8.)

Old Paths

Vol. 45, No. 2 February 2021

"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

HOSTILE WITNESSES

By Danny Boggs

Some people praised him; he deserved it. Some people were puzzled by him; they had never seen anything like him. Some people pushed back against him, but even in their pushback they often uttered wonderful truth about Jesus.

They spoke the truth about him in calculated, patronizing flattery. "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances." (Matthew 22:16, ESV.)

Demons - whoever, whatever they are - always seemed to identify Jesus accurately. "I know who you are - the Holy One of God." (Mark 1:24.) "And Demons came out of many crying, 'You are the Son of God!'" (Luke 4:41.) "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" (Luke 8:28.)

His opponents knew that Jesus was casting out demons, but they crafted the most sinister of explanations: "He casts out demons by the prince of demons." (Matthew 9:34.) That was nonsense. (Matthew 12:22-32.) But their smear campaign caught on with some people. (John 10:19-21.)

When they meant to accuse Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees gave us a vocabulary that warms us to him. "He eats with tax collectors and sinners." (Matthew 9:11.) "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." (Luke 19:7.) "This man receives sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:2.) "A friend of tax collectors and sinners." (Matthew 11:9.)

They would not believe and obey Jesus, but they could not deny: "This man performs many signs." (John 11:47.)

"It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." (John 11:50.) Little did Caiaphas know how God was using his incendiary words. "He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad." (John 11:51,52.)

At his trials and crucifixion, Jesus' enemies and persecutors mocked him with words that in themselves were totally true. "Behold your king." (John 19:14.) "Hail, King of the Jews." (Matthew 27:29.) "Let the Christ, the King of Israel come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." (Mark 15:32.) "He saved others." (Luke 23:35.) "He trusts in God." (Matthew 27:43.)

As the plot to kill Jesus unfolded, Judas lamented, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." (Matthew 27:4.) Pilate's wife dreamed about him and told her husband, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man." (Matthew 27:19.) Pilate did not stop to rush the execution, but admitted, "I find no guilt in this man." (Luke 23:4, 14-15.) When it was all over, the centurion in charge at Golgotha could only admit, "Truly, this was the Son of God." (Mark 15:39.)

People who didn't believe, receive, or love Jesus said plenty to justify believing, receiving and loving him. If only the Pharisees had been right as their frustration boiled over: "Look! The whole world is following him!" (John 12:19.)

— Neosho, MO

A BROKEN HEART

By Danny Tunnell

Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted. (Luke 4:18.) The word "brokenhearted" is two words in the Greek. "Suntribo" means to break in pieces, to shatter. It is like throwing a jar down and it shatters. The second word "heart" in Greek is "kardia" from which we get the word "cardiac." It means the heart. Jesus is talking about an emotional healing.

Has your heart ever been broken? Has it ever been shattered? The good news is that there is someone who can heal a broken heart. Jesus can put every piece back together and you don't have to live with a broken heart.

After David had sinned so grievously with Bathsheba, and then had her husband, Uriah, killed, he was confronted by Nathan the prophet and began to realize his sin. (2 Samuel 12:7.) The brokenhearted and now contrite king cries to God in the 51st Psalm: "Have mercy upon me, O God . . . Cleanse me from my sin. I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. I have sinned against Thee, and done this evil in Thy sight . . . The sacrifices You accept are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

David's godly sorrow brought about repentance and restoration. (2 Corinthians 7:10.)

Peter's tender heart was broken after he had denied Jesus. The rooster crowed and Jesus turned and looked upon Peter. (Luke 22:60-62.)

Saul's heart was broken on the road to Damascus when Jesus asked the penetrating question, "Why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4.) That honest question cut deeply into Saul's heart. Later, when Saul had become the beloved apostle Paul, he described himself as the least of the apostles, and even the least of all saints, because he had persecuted the church of God. (1 Corinthians 15:9; Ephesians 3:8.)

Has your heart ever been broken like that? A broken heart that helped to lead you to repentance? Every honest Christian would have to say, "yes." The Lord is still correcting those that he loves. (Hebrews 12:5-11.)

A century has come and gone since Ira Stanphill was a boy growing up in Coffeyville, Kansas. He would become one of the most respected and prolific gospel song writers of all time. "He washed my eyes with tears" is one of his compositions:

"He washed my eyes with tears that I might see. The broken heart I had was good for me. He tore it all apart and looked inside. He found it full of fear and foolish pride. He swept away the things that made me blind. And then I saw the clouds were silver lined. And now I understand twas best for me. He washed my eyes with tears that I might see. The glory of Himself is revealed to me. I did not know that he had wounded hands. I saw the blood he spilt upon the sands. I saw the cross of shame and wept and cried. He was my substitute. For me He died. And now I'm glad He came so tenderly. And washed my eyes with tears that I might see."

— Miami, OK

“LET GOD BE TRUE”

By Dalton Key

If the Bible says it, we'd best believe it. "Let God be true, but every man a liar." (Romans 3:4.)

As we work to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, and yes, even truth from falsehoods, we should never dismiss the weighty words of the Almighty. Never forget - "God cannot lie." (Hebrews 6:18.)

Haven't we wasted enough time listening to the "experts" who keep droning on and on, saying less and less, while wasting more and more words in the process? Bertrand Russell once observed, "Even when the experts all agree, they may well be mistaken." Jesus put it even plainer. "If the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch." (Matthew 15:14.)

Listening to public opinion is no better. The majority of us has been in the wrong since the days of the flood. Where was the majority when the golden calf was being worshipped? Where was the majority when Joshua and Caleb encouraged victory over the armies of Canaan? Where was the majority when Pilate offered to release Jesus rather than Barabbas? They were where the majority has almost always been, on the wrong side of the issue. "You must not do wrong just because everyone else is doing it." (Exodus 23:2, NCV.)

Perhaps we should just listen to the lawmakers. But no, the voice of government is often proven over time to have been mistaken, misguided, and altogether wrong. Just making a thing legal doesn't make it right. The law in Daniel's day prohibited prayer. Our Lord was crucified by those purporting to uphold the law. The early church lost thousands of her members to martyrdom because of the laws and lawmakers of that time. Legality and propriety are often miles apart, yet when push comes to shove, "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29.)

We could just listen to our heart. But the heart too often leads us astray. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9.) "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12.)

The best and wisest course for all of us is to simply listen to the words of God above all else. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." (Psalm 1:1,2.)

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

"WAKE UP, SLEEPER!"

By Dalton Key

Everything that is made easy to see can become light. This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper! Rise from death, and Christ will shine on you. So be very careful how you live. Do not live like those who are unwise, but live wisely." (Ephesians 5:14, 15, NCV.)

For far too many of us, laziness has become no less than an art form, or as Kin Hubbard once observed, "Some folks can keep so busy doing nothing that they seem indispensable."

It's true. Dodging work and responsibility in general can become a tiresome, life-long occupation requiring more thought and effort than would have been required by just rolling up the sleeves and doing something constructive in the first place. Keeping busy at doing nothing can be exhausting!

Jesus described this kind of man in His parable of the talents. The servant entrusted with one talent took the time, the planning and the effort to dig a hole and bury his talent rather than do anything to increase its value. He is labeled as "wicked and slothful." (Matthew 25:26.) He could have invested the talent. At the very least, he could have put it to work earning interest. Instead, he went to work digging a hole.

I wonder if the one-talent man ever complained to others of his lord's unfairness, of his lack of equal opportunity, or about what he may have considered as questionable, foolhardy methods carried out by his fellow servants? I wonder if he ever came to realize that he failed because of his own laziness; that if he had worked half as hard working as he worked to get out of working he might have actually accomplished something?

If this man was like so many others like him, I doubt he ever got the point.

Most lazy people will blame the world, the weather, society, their friends, their circumstances, and sometimes even their God before laying the blame where it belongs -squarely in the lap of their own laziness!

And too often the problem shows up at church. What of business meetings which find us doing nothing but discussing business of past business meetings during which we never got around to the Lord's business? What of our time and hard work expended in analyzing charts, graphs and statistics; poring over polls, surveys, and questionnaires, efforts which often actually keep us from going out and doing what we know should be done? We've hidden behind bureaucracies, budgets and buildings long enough, blaming our lack of growth on everything from poverty to lack of persecution, from the devil to demographics, while the real problem rests with us and our own slothfulness. Too many of us have come to see things as did the lazy slug who opined, "I love work; it fascinates me; I can sit and look at it for hours."

"Wake up, sleeper" and then "Be not weary in well doing." (2 Thessalonians 3:13.)



JUDGMENT DAY: WHAT WILL BE JUDGED?

By Milton Smith

The question posed in the title of this article is not "who" will be judged on Judgment Day, but "what" will be judged. We know that every soul will be judged on this day. Jesus, Himself, said in Matthew 25:31-32, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." Consequently, we know that every soul who ever lived will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

But "what" will be judged on that day? In other words, exactly how and in what manner will each person be judged?

Revelation 20:12 tells us, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened. And another book was

opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the books, according to their works." Paul tells us, ". . . every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." (1 Corinthians 3:8). It seems quite obvious that each person will be judged by his own obedience, conduct, and faithfulness. Even our motives will be considered. There are some people who do many good works in this life, but they often do those things for the wrong reasons. I'm sure there are even some atheists who do certain "good" works. But God will judge our motive as much as our action.

Paul tells us that we are going to be judged according to the things done in the body, "whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10.) We thus know that our conduct in this life will be part of our own judgment. Jesus also tells us that our service to our fellow man

will be a part of our own judgment. (cf. Matthew 25:34-40.) Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3:13 that "every man's work shall be made manifest." Every feature of our life will be judged on that day. Obedience, motive, conduct, service and faithfulness will be the type of things that will judge us. It will be those things viewed by God as having eternal value that will prove to be worthy of eternal reward.

— Tulsa, OK

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." (Revelation 20:11,12.)

Honesty

By Joe Slater

Truth can be uncomfortable! To avoid the distress, one of the first bad things we learned to do is lie. We soon discovered that lying only makes matters worse, but still we do it.

Will we ever learn?

Satan is "a liar and the father of it." (John 8:44.) He deceived Eve in the Garden, and has been plying his devious trade ever since.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, "it is impossible for God to lie." (Hebrews 6:18; also Titus 1:2.) It isn't only that God "won't" lie - He "can't"! It is impossible. His nature (holiness, righteousness, justice, etc.) is such that lying isn't even an option.

The first sin recorded in the early church was lying. Ananias and Sapphira lied about what they gave to help the needy. Peter asked, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? . . . You have not lied to men, but to God." (Acts 5:3-4.) Fortunately for us, God no longer strikes people dead for lying as He did those two!

Paul exhorted the Colossians, "Do

not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds." (3:9.) Just as you would remove filthy, smelly clothes, you must remove lying from your way of life. You are a new person in Christ; don't act like Satan!

That includes the "little white lies," that so many try to excuse. Scripture knows no such classification. It's futile to minimize sin! Hear John's words from Revelation 21:8 - "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Not "some liars"; not "most liars"; not "big liars," but all liars!

Truth can be uncomfortable; Hell is more so!

— Justin, TX

"Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another. 'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on

your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification that it may impart grace to the hearers." (Ephesians 4:25-29.)

Old Paths

829 S. Rockford Ave.,
Tulsa, OK. 74120

On a nonprofit basis.
Published monthly and
supported by Churches of Christ
and individuals.

Dalton Key Editor
"Subscription Free;
Prayers Requested;
Contributions Appreciated."