

The Reflector

A Christian met another on the street one day, and said, "Good morning, brother."

The other kept walking without a word. The first brother openly criticized the "unfriendly" brother. Finally, someone asked the second brother why he had refused to speak to the first brother. The second brother asked when he had failed to speak. When told the day upon which he had been so unfriendly, he replied, "I probably did not speak, in fact, I doubt that I even saw him. You see, I was on my way down to the funeral home to make arrangements for my father's burial. I was probably so pre-occupied that I just did not notice." This story, which I heard many years ago, illustrates how easy it is for us to misjudge others.

When the Pharisees, in their haste and ignorance, misjudged the Lord's disciples he told them, "But if you had known what *this* means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless." (Matt. 12:7—NKJ).

How often would it be appropriate to say to us, "if you had known...you would not have condemned the guiltless?" How often do we, in our ignorance, damage or even destroy good and harmonious relationships by expressing hasty and unfounded judgments to and about others? How many churches are disturbed by such judgments? How much better it would be if we held our fire until we knew that we had all the facts? "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him." (Prov. 18:13—NKJ)

The Lord's cause is not well served either by those who refuse to condemn the guilty when needed to save souls and purify the church (See 1 Cor. 5:2ff) nor by those who condemn the guiltless.

One tends to judge unrighteously when he is ignorant in any of three areas: 1) the scriptures that bear on the case, 2) the things that were said

or done in the case, or 3) extenuating circumstances surrounding the case. Any one or any combination of these may cause one to stand condemned for condemning the guiltless.

The Scriptures

Peter wrote to women, "Do not let

and is not in the original. Most other translations do not have it. Neither the King James nor American Standard supply the word. So, if gold is forbidden, so is clothes.

Verse 4 gives us the "but" portion of the expression: "but *let it be* the

Condemning The GUILTLESS

By EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.

your adornment be *merely* outward — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel" (1 Pet. 3:3—NKJ). The King James says, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel."

Some have used this to unjustly condemn women for wearing jewelry — especially gold. They condemn the guiltless because they do not know what this scripture is saying. This is one of those "not/but" expressions, where the "not" part of the expression is not prohibited, but de-emphasized in order to greatly emphasize the "but" portion. It is like saying, "It is *not* the money, *but* the love of my work that keeps me on this job." One is simply saying that the money, as good or even important as it may be, is not nearly as important as his love for his work.

If Peter's statement forbids wearing gold, it also forbids wearing clothes (apparel). The word "fine", in the New King James Version, is italicized indicating it is supplied by the translators

hidden person of the heart." So, the Christian woman needs to understand that, however important her outward adorning may be, her inward adorning is far more important. There is where her emphasis is to be.

There are other such "not/but" expressions in the scriptures. "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life..." (John 6:27—NKJ). Does Jesus forbid working for a living? No! He is simply saying that as important as working for food that perishes may be, that working for that which endures to everlasting life is far more important. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19,20—NKJ). Again, Jesus does not forbid our having a savings account (laying up treasure), but that laying up treasure in heaven is far more important.

"Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matt. 7:1—NKJ), is sometimes used by brethren to judge other brethren for judging. Again, if they knew what the scripture means they would not condemn their innocent brethren.

These assert that Jesus forbids our judging others — period, exclamation point. Yet, there are scriptural responsibilities, clearly taught, that demand that we make some judgements about others. We must discern (judge) between “good” and “evil.” (Heb. 5:14). We must, at times, judge some men to be “wicked” and take appropriate action toward them. (1 Cor. 5:3,13). At other times we must judge some to be “good” and act accordingly. (Acts 11:24). Sometimes we must judge some to be “weak” brethren (1 Cor. 8:11) and others to be “false” brethren (Gal. 2:4; 2 Cor. 11:26) and treat them as such.

The person who uses this passage to criticize one for judging another is, by the same token, doing the very thing that he says is forbidden by the passage — judging another.

Jesus does not forbid all judging of others, but urges that we be careful and fair. The context of Matt 7:1 clearly shows that Jesus had in mind judging by a double standard. (See verses 2,3) Such hypocritical judging is sinful.

Jesus even commanded righteous judgement (John 7:24). Righteous judgement demands that, rather than jumping to hasty conclusions based on appearance, we get the facts needed to rightly judge matters. Things may not be as they appear to be on the surface.

Things Said And Done

Jesus was reported to have said that John would not die. But those who so reported did not have it

straight about was Jesus said: “Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but ‘If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?’” (John 21:23—NKJ). This illustrates how easily it is to make a judgement based upon our interpretation of what was said or done rather than what was actually said or done.

Sometimes we hastily pass judgement on events or situations. We get a few facts and fill in any gaps of information with our imagination and condemn the guiltless. We might do well to ask ourselves a few questions here. “Am I in a position to know what was said or done in this situation?” “Do I have enough pertinent information to make a judgment?” “How reliable is my source of information?”

One does not always have to be on the scene to make a judgment about who is right or wrong in an event or situation. Paul accused the Corinthians of contentions or divisions based on that which was reported to him by Chloe’s household (1 Cor. 1:11). In such cases, one needs to know that his sources are reliable. Were they were in a position to know the facts, etc?

However, in most cases, it is extremely difficult to get enough reliable information about events and situations from a distance. Often our informers unconsciously slant the information in their favor. Often we get conflicting information from people who should be in a position to know the facts. For these reasons, one should be extremely slow and careful before passing judgment, lest he condemn the innocent.

Sometimes we hastily pass judgement concerning a brother’s position based on something he may have said or wrote. We might do well to ask, “Could his words be fairly interpreted differently from the way I am interpreting them?” If so, then could it not be that *he* may have had something entirely different in mind than that which came to my mind when I heard his words? Could it not be that his thinking is not nearly as far off base as his faulty wording might indicate? Why not investigate a little further before passing judgment on his position on

the subject.

Extenuating Circumstances

The case of the brother who did not speak to another, referred to at the beginning of this article, illustrates how extenuating circumstances would alter our judgement, if we only knew.

There are things that wrong under any circumstances. I know of no circumstances that would justify adultery, fornication or lying. If one did it, he is guilty regardless to the circumstances. If one denies the faith or teaches a false doctrine, he is guilty. There is no justification for it, not even the threat of death.

There are other things that depend on other factors. Here we must be extra careful not to condemn the guiltless. There are good works that Christians are commanded to do. “Visiting” the sick and needy (Matt. 25:35,36,42,43; Jas. 1:27), “be hospitable” (1 Pet. 4:9—NKJ), financial support those who teach/preach (Gal. 6:6), etc., are such good works commanded of Christians. But the extent and manner of doing of these things in each instance depends on each person’s abilities, opportunities, and knowledge of the need. (cf. Gal. 6:10; Jas. 4:17).

Because opportunities, abilities, and circumstances vary greatly from person to person, we need to realize that the details of doing such good works are highly personal. It is not up to me to decide when, how, where, or how extensively another should do any these good works. Only he and God are in a position to know.

All too often because one is *not aware* of any visiting another may be doing, or any acts of hospitality, or any instances of financially supporting the gospel, he will hastily condemn the other for neglecting his duty before God. After all these things are commanded of God. To this all would agree.

But, does he know that it is *neglect* or is it that the person’s *circumstances* are such that he has neither the ability or opportunity? It is possible that the criticized person may care as much or more about visiting the sick, or caring for the needy or supporting the gospel as his critic does — he just lacks the opportunity. One’s financial, physical, emotional and/or environmental circumstances may prevent him



“LOOKS LIKE A SHORT SERMON THIS MORNING”

from doing what he would dearly love to do. Does this mean he is any less caring, less hospitable, or less supportive of others. No! Paul wrote to the Philippians, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; **though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.** (Phil. 4:10—NKJ). The fact that they had not been supporting Paul for a while did not mean they were negligent of him and did not care, but they lacked opportunity.

Unless someone has appointed us God, with omnipresence and omniscience, we need to be careful about judging brethren along these lines? Could it be that these brethren quietly do many of these things without telling us about them? Could it be that we do not know their circumstances well enough to know their abilities and opportunities? Could it be that they have other responsibilities and burdens that may be just as pressing that require their time and resources as the things we perceive them to be neglecting? Many of these things we cannot know without becoming busybodies in other men's matters — a thing condemned of itself. (1 Pet. 4:16).

Let us be cautious lest, in our ignorance, we condemn the guiltless. "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy" (James 2:23—NKJ).

Forget and Remember

Forget each kindness that you do
As soon as you have done it,
Forget the praise that falls on you
The moment you have won it;
Forget the slander that you hear
Before you repeat it;
Forget each slight, each spite, each
sneer,
Wherever you may meet it.
Remember every kindness done
To you, whate'er its measure;
Remember praise by others won
And pass it on with pleasure;
Remember those who lend you aid
And be a grateful debtor;
Remember every promise made
And keep it to the letter. ANONYMOUS

Busybodies

By PAUL KELLER
From PAUSE-PROFIT-PONDER

There are many pitfalls into which a Christian may stumble—many dangers to which he is subject. Although one may be careful in seeking to develop various virtues he may, through lack of vigilance, permit himself to develop weaknesses in other respects. And these weaknesses may continue—and increase—while one seems unaware of their presence. Surely, the "wiles of the devil" are such as to oftentimes cause men to be content with "one-sided" development. Constant sobriety and vigilance are needed if one is to avoid being overcome by the adversary (1 Peter 5:8).

One of the pitfalls into which one may stumble is that of being a busybody. That this is a very real and serious danger is evidenced by the fact that New Testament writers warn against it. To Christians Peter wrote, "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matter" (1 Peter 4:15). While we readily recognize the sinfulness of murder, theft and evil-doing, how many consider the sinfulness of being a busybody? Yet, Peter warns against this right along with these other sins. While a Christian is to be concerned about the spiritual welfare of others there are many things which are one's own business, and with which others have no right to meddle. To be a busybody is to seek to be "the overseer of another's matters not within his province." This, the Christian is warned against.

Yes, a Christian is to be actively concerned with the spiritual welfare of others. He is to be watchful for his brethren and "if any . . . err from the truth" is to try to "convert him" (James 5:19-20). If a brother is "overtaken in a fault" he is to "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" at the same time considering himself lest he also be tempted (Gal. 6:1). Chris-

tians are to "exhort one another daily" (Heb. 3:13), and are to "warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thess. 5:14). But, a Christian is NOT to be a busybody! He is to recognize that there are some personal affairs of others which are none of his business! And he should not "poke his nose" into such business of others!

Idleness is a stepping-stone to meddlesomeness. It is often true that those who have the least business of their own to attend to are the ones who are so "nosey" about the business of others. Thus, Paul counseled that the younger widows should "marry, bear children, guide the house. . . ." Unless busy with these worthwhile things "they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13,14). This principle which is recognized in the scriptures is also borne out by observation. Apparently, one of the reasons why older women are so often busybodies is that they are no longer occupied with the responsibilities of former years, when their children were at home and they were busy in attending the needs of a growing family. A lack of duties to occupy their time, as was formerly true, is also a reason why so many older men become busybodies. But the sin of being busybodies is not confined to older men and women. It is altogether too prevalent among those who are younger. And idleness is a factor which so often contributes to it. But, regardless of age, it is wrong to be a busybody. It is sinful—and one should cease the practice.

Peter indicates that one's being a busybody brings "suffering" upon himself (1 Peter 4:15). And surely, this is the case! Nor do we question the justice of it. The busybody suffers the

loss of respect of others. He is shunned and avoided. He experiences the bitterness of loneliness—of feeling “left out”—because his meddlesomeness quite naturally causes others to shrink from his company. And while he may try to blame others he brought it on himself! Someone has well said: “One who is too wise an observer of the business of others, like one who is too curious in observing the labor of bees, will often be stung for his curiosity.”

Could it be that YOU are a busy-body? One can more readily recognize this trait in others than in himself. Each of us needs to make a personal self-examination—and eliminate every vestige of this sin from his life. And each of us needs to heed the counsel of the apostle Paul, “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands. . .” (1 Thess. 4:11)

What^{Did} Christ Build?

By ROBERT TURNER
From PLAIN TALK

What did Christ *build* when He built the church? (Mat. 16:18) The figure is that of constructing a temple (1 Cor. 3:10-17) where “lively stones” (1 Pet 2:5) are put together upon the “foundation” — the truth that Jesus is the Christ. (When messengers of Christ are considered “builders” (1 Cor. 3) or even the “foundation” (Eph. 2:20-22), the essential truth is maintained — Christ is building His church; i.e., He is *bringing together people* who heed His call; and as a (convened) assembly or “called out” body of people they are, when considered as a whole, **LIKED** UNTO A BUILDING.

What did Christ *buy* when he bought the church? (Acts 20:28). the figure is that of manumission; paying the price of a slave in order that he may be freed. (1 Cor. 6:20, 7:22-23, Gal. 5:1) We were slaved of sin until we “obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine;” a freeing made possible

by Christ's death on our behalf. (Rom. 6:1-18) So Christ “paid the price” for your sins, and mine. By His death He “acquired” (footnote, ASV) *people*, one by one; saving each from his sins as that one humbly submits to His will. The figure of **BUYING THE FREEDOM OF A SLAVE** may have been taken from the common practice of the first century, records of which are preserved to this day. Just remember, Christ bought *people* who, considered collectively, are called “the church.”

What did Christ *cleanse* when He cleansed the church? (Eph. 5:25-27) He made clean those *people* who submit to “the washing of water with the word.” This figure is a common one — the removal of sins being likened to filth, washed from clothes or body. (Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). As the application of “the water with the word” is obviously made to individuals, as each hears and learns the truth, and obeys it; we are again faced with the fact that Christ's cleansing of “the church” is the remission of sins which He makes possible for *people*, one by one; who are called “the church” when considered collectively.

Now all of these things Christ is said to have done: He *built* the church, *bought* the church, *cleansed* the church. The foundation has been firmly laid, the purchase price paid, and the cleansing blood shed. His sacrifice of Himself was “once for all” (Heb. 10:10), and need never be repeated. But there is a sense in which the construction work continues and “lively stones” continue to be placed upon that foundation. The “price” for freedom from sin is still amply provided for all who will avail themselves of this marvelous opportunity. The cleansing power of the blood of Christ is yours and mine for the using — in coming unto Him, and as we falter in His service. (Note 1 John 1:17; 2:1-3).

Christ did not build, buy, and cleanse some sort of vehicle into which you come, be seated, and ride home to heaven. He will build YOU into His building, buy YOU from your slavery to sin, and cleanse YOU from your spiritual filth; and then you will be a part of that body of people who have been saved by His grace, and have thus become the church of Christ.

Schedule of Services

Sundays:

Bible Classes 9:45 a.m.

Worship 10:45 a.m.

Worship 6:00 p.m.

Wednesdays:

Bible Class 10:00 a.m.

Bible Classes 7:30 p.m.

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