

# WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Hear - (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27).

Believe - (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16).

Repent - (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3).

Confess - (Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36).

Be baptized - (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27).

Live faithfully unto death - (Rev. 2:10).

# UPON THE ROCK

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Vol. 7 Issue 6

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## Wisdom Through The Ages

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### Introduction

I remember the words to a song from when I was in high school that proclaimed, "Everything has changed, absolutely nothing's changed." The words, though seemingly contradictory, express a great truth. It is certainly true that we live in a fast paced and ever changing world. Have you ever watched the rolling stock *market* ticker on the bottom of the screen of Fox News or MSNBC? The ticker rolls by so fast and the stock prices are constantly changing and being updated so that I cannot keep up. Sometimes I feel that way about the world in which we live and life in general. It can seem that things are moving so fast and changing so often that it is impossible for us to keep up. However, at the same time I can see that things really don't change all that much. Problems that existed decades, even centuries ago, still plague us today. Despite our advanced technology and ever increasing knowledge, crime, violence and wars still plague our land. Although great riches and treasures of gold, diamonds and oil have been extracted from the earth, poverty still covers most of the world. There has never been a time, including today, when man has not suffered from the temptation and consequences of sin. Despite all of our advanced learning, great education and ever increasing knowledge, these are problems that we alone cannot overcome. In each of the three dispensations of time (Patriarchal, Mosaic, Christian) God has revealed His wisdom to man through His word. When the time came for the building of the tabernacle, God put the spirit of wisdom in certain men to enable them to construct it exactly as He desired. In this context we learn that wisdom is directly connected to keeping God's commands. *"And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab...and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee"* (Exodus 31:6). No man can be truly considered wise unless he is searching and obeying the will of God. *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction"* (Proverbs 1:7). The men chosen to contribute articles in this issue were selected because they recognize the wisdom to be gained from the Scriptures. All of them have contributed material that is intended

kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (1 Tim. 4:6-8).

Take not of Paul's words "and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." What comfort that affords us, if we too, stand up for right and speak out against wrong! We must also wage war against the enemies of truth. Let us put on the whole armor of God, wielding the sword of the Spirit, the word of God (Eph. 6:11-17) and "Stand therefore" (verse 14). Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10).

Having the wisdom to stand up for righteousness and to speak out against wickedness is ultra-critical at this time in our nation. By standing up, and speaking out, and praying fervently, we can defeat the backers of the sinful practices of homosexuality and abortion. We can make a difference by voting in harmony with truth and against those who support such acts of wickedness.

Indeed, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). Let us use wisdom, do all we can to heal our nation, and inherit eternal life.

windows and prayed even toward Jerusalem (Dan. 6:10). Could not God have heard righteous Daniel's prayers with his windows closed? Surely he could have, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12). Daniel would not hide his light under a bushel (Matt. 5:15). He would not change to please man; his life's aim was to please the God of Heaven. "Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God" (Dan. 6:11). They went to King Darius and brought to his attention the decree he had signed and told him of Daniel's praying. The king wanted to deliver Daniel, but the men reminded him that the statute could not be changed according to the Law of the Medes and Persians (Dan. 6:12-15). Daniel was cast into the lions' den and it was sealed shut. He stood for right and against wrong. God sent an angel who closed the lions' mouths. The next morning Daniel was taken up from the den with no harm done to him (Dan. 6:16-23).

### WISDOM IN THE CHRISTIAN AGE

The apostle Paul was on the front line of baffle against Satan and his evil forces. He turned the world upside down to get it right side up. He did not budge one inch relative to God's truth. As a result he could write to the Corinthians, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (1 Cor. 11:24-27). Paul was so unshakable in his stand for righteousness that he would say to those trying to persuade him not to go to Jerusalem, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:12, 13).

Because of his wisdom in standing up for righteousness and speaking out against wickedness, Paul could say toward the end of life's day, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have

to cause the reader to see the wisdom of God concerning these subjects. Beyond that, it is up to the reader to believe it and obey it.

This issue is somewhat unique. The theme, as you have seen, is "Wisdom Through The Ages." This theme is intended to convey two ideas. 1) It will explore the wisdom of God as seen in each of the three Bible ages (dispensations) and 2) the contributing authors vary in ages from seventeen to seventy. The intention of using writers in their teens, twenties, thirties, forties, fifties and seventies, is to show that regardless of age, background, race or gender, the word of God is unchanging.

### Wisdom In The Patriarchal Age

During the Patriarchal age God dealt with man in a unique way. At that time there was not a written code of law (i.e. Bible) and God spoke directly to the Patriarchs (fathers) to reveal His will. "*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets*" (Hebrews 1:1). Although it was not delivered to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah and Job in a written form, it was still the word of God and authoritative. Many years later God would, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), inspire men to record these events and we now have them in written form to help our faith. "*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*" (Romans 15:4).

Although not explicitly stated, the supreme wisdom of Jehovah is demonstrated repeatedly during the Patriarchal age. One such example is found in Genesis 12 when God separated Abram from his idolatrous nation. "*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, Unto a land that I will shew thee*" (Genesis 12:1). Why would God want this great man of faith to leave his homeland and get away from his kindred? In Genesis 31:19,31-34, we learn that the people from whom Abraham was separated were idolatrous people. They worshipped images, idols and false gods. Joshua would later mention this in challenging the descendants of Abraham to forsake false gods and serve Jehovah., "*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD,*

choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether **the gods which your fathers served** that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15). Why did God call Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees? In His wisdom He knew the best chance for His people remaining free from idols was to separate them from those who worshipped false gods. Whereas human wisdom might suggest it would be best for a man to remain near his family, God understood that in this situation it was best for them to be separated.

### Wisdom In The Mosaic Age

Perhaps the greatest demonstration of wisdom in the Mosaic age is recorded in the section of the Bible often referred to as “Wisdom Literature” (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon). The word “wisdom” is used one hundred thirteen times in these five books. Again the truth is revealed that true wisdom comes from God. *“For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding”* (Proverbs 2:6). The Lord teaches us that happiness in life comes from the wisdom of God. *“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding”* (Proverbs 3:13). The wisdom of God leads us in paths of righteousness. *“I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths”* (Proverbs 4:11). Wisdom is more valuable to us than riches and jewels. *“For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it”* (Proverbs 8:11). *“How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!”* (Proverbs 16:16). Wisdom is of such value that if necessary it should be purchased at any cost and never sold. *“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding”* (Proverbs 23:23). The Bible even teaches that a man can gain favor with other men by demonstrating wisdom. *“A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised”* (Proverbs 12:8). Solomon, the wisest man in the Bible (Ecclesiastes 2:9), said that wisdom was more powerful than ten men, a better defense than weapons and better than strength. *“Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city”* (Ecclesiastes 7:19). *“Wisdom is better than weapons of war”* (Ecclesiastes 9:18). *“Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength”* (Ecclesiastes 9:16). Is there any doubt that the wisdom that came down from heaven is an

God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” (Dan. 3:15). Their faith not wavering, they replied, “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan. 3:17, 18). Nebuchadnezzar ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than the usual temperature for such taking of life, but it might as well have been seven million times hotter, for no increase of heat would keep these three from the saving hand of God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be taken by his mighty army, bound, and thrown into the fire (Dan. 3:12-21). Observing the actions of his army, Nebuchadnezzar was astonished to see four men walking about, unharmed in the inferno, the fourth being “like the Son of God.” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth from the furnace. “And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king’s counselors., saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of the head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God” (Dan. 3:25-28). There was a light than thinned infinitely brighter than that of the furnace, the light of three Godly youths.

Daniel was yet another Hebrew in Babylonian captivity who would stand up for righteousness and speak out against wickedness. Because of Daniel’s excellent spirit, King Darius preferred Daniel over the presidents and princes and thought of putting him in a position over the whole realm (Dan. 6:3). This did not set well with the presidents and princes. They set out to find fault in Daniel against the kingdom. He was faithful to his duties, however, so they turned on his obedience to God. The presidents, governors, princes, counselors, and captains devised a royal statute, a firm decree, “. . . that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions... Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree” (Dan. 6:4-9).

Daniel knew this decree was signed, but did this stop him from praying to God? No. In fact, he went to his house and opened his

according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (Gen. 6:22). The raging flood began to rise, and God sealed the door to the ark shut. The people then knew that Noah was right, but it was too late.

“Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither” (Gen. 39:1). Joseph’s master, seeing that Jehovah was with Joseph, made him overseer of his house and all that he had (Gen. 39:3, 4). Potiphar’s wife told Joseph to lie with her, but he refused. He stood up for righteousness and spoke against that which was wrong, saying, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9). He knew that the sin of adultery was against God; all sin is against God (1 John 3:4). Many would not be this strong, but Joseph was a man of God. He put God first in every area of his life. He knew well that “. . .this is the love of God that we keep his commandments” (1 John 5:3), and that the pleasures of sin are only for a season (Heb. 11:25). Later, Potiphar’s wife “caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out” (Gen. 39:12). Joseph realized he could replace the garment, but he did not want to lose his character.

### WISDOM TN THE MOSAICAL AGE

Those in the Babylonian captivity were instructed by Nebuchadnezzar’s henchmen to bow down and worship the golden idol set up by King Nebuchadnezzar. “And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace” (Dan. 3:5, 6). Three young Hebrew captives, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (their Babylonian names that had been assigned to them) knew the one true Almighty God’s instruction, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:3). They had heard about the fiery furnace, but it would not keep them from standing up for right and speaking against wickedness. They would serve God only. Nebuchadnezzar was given word that they had refused to worship his idol. His reaction was one of rage and fury. He had the young men brought before him, demanding (again that they worship the image he had made. He repeated the consequences they would face if they continued in their refusal. Mocking their faithfulness to God, Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “...and who is that

essential part of a happy, successful and meaningful existence on earth?

### Wisdom In The Christian Age

In the previous paragraph Solomon was referred to as the wisest of all men. This statement is only partially true. It is true that God granted him wisdom that no one before or after him attained (1 Kings 4:29-34), but there came a man who was a descendant of Solomon who was truly the wisest of all. This was because He had the wisdom of God. “*The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the Uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here*” (Matthew 12:42). The greatest demonstration of wisdom came through the teachings of Jesus Christ. When people heard His great wisdom they were amazed. “*And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?*” (Matthew 13:54).

Further, the wisdom of God is superior to the supposed wisdom of this world. “*For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*” (1 Corinthians 1:19,20). “*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness*” (1 Corinthians 3:19).

What can a man do if he finds himself lacking wisdom or having trusted in the wisdom of men instead of the wisdom of God? “*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*” (James 1:5). The wisdom that he will receive from God is pure and good and right, never leading a man into wrong or danger. “*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*” (James 3:17).

It is often the case that man thinks he knows what is right and best, only to “find out the hard way” that he was wrong. “*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Proverbs 16:25). God has given wisdom to man for as long as man has been on the earth. Sadly, just as God has given man wisdom in every age, the majority of men have ignored His wisdom in every age. Whether you are young or old, lived in the days of Noah or today, the wisdom of God, as revealed through His word, serves as a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path (Psalm 119:105). The definition of the word wisdom is quite extensive and applies to a wide variety of topics and aspects of life. Wisdom refers to, “intelligence; the use of knowledge on very diverse matters; skill in the management of affairs.” Knowledge is knowing what is the right thing to do. Wisdom is knowing the right thing to do and then doing it.

## Wisdom In Selecting Leaders

By Tom Holland

If leaders are important, the selecting or electing of leaders is likewise significant. Some leaders may, in a sense, impose themselves on a group of people, an example would be Hitler in Germany. But in many situations leaders are chosen by those who need and desire their leadership. This is certainly true in representative types of governments such as we have in the United States. It is also true in the Lord’s church that people are qualified to lead because they have become obedient to the word of the Holy Spirit in the Bible and are accepted as the leaders of God’s people. In discussing the selection of leaders we will consider the following: one, the importance of leaders; two, qualifications of leaders; three, selecting leaders.

### Importance of Leaders

Any grouping of people, a nation, a civic club, an educational institution, or the Lord’s church requires leadership. Generally speaking, leaders will be either competent or incompetent.

## WISDOM IN STANDING UP FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SPEAKING OUT AGAINST WICKEDNESS

Andy Cates

We are to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). We must use this knowledge attained to carry out God’s will every day that we live. This knowledge applied is wisdom. It is God’s great desire that we stand up for righteousness and speak out against wickedness, that we do right and go against wrong. In doing this we display wisdom before our Creator and Sustainer and carry out our privilege and duty as Christians to be a preserving influence on society as “the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13), and a saving influence as “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14).

There have been three dispensations or ages: the Patriarchal Age, the Mosaical Age, and the Christian Age. Today, you and I are living in the Christian age, the “last days” (Heb. 1:1,2). In the study of the Holy Scriptures we see numerous accounts of wise people of God in every age standing up for righteousness and speaking out against wickedness. These are all examples to us.

### WISDOM IN THE PATRIARCHAL AGE

In the time of Noah, “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.... But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:5, 8). God instructed Noah to build an ark, for He was going to send a flood that would cover all the earth. Noah was “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5) and warned of the coming catastrophe. Just think of the ridicule he must have received. It had never rained before the flood (Gen. 2:6). We can hear the people as Noah was building this huge vessel: “Noah, it has never rained; what do you think you are doing? Have you lost your mind?” Noah would not be swayed away from doing God’s will. He stood for right and spoke against the wickedness of that day. “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house” (Heb. 11:7). “Thus did Noah;

In the same manner, Christians today are faced with problems of immorality. Sin has been a problem ever since the very root of human history (Adam and Eve). Yet, God will not leave us in the dark. He has provided for us a means by which we can avoid at all costs those who are immoral and has told us what we must do to be saved from the destruction of the wicked.

Study and obey. God “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son (Hebrews 1:2).” The commandments set forth in the Bible will ultimately judge us on the Judgment Day (John 12:48). 2 Timothy 2:15 teaches that, as Christians, we are to study to be approved of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 notes the fact that all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God “and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” The Bible is given to us so that we, as people of God, might be complete and thoroughly furnished.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth... When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory... Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: Colossians 3:1-2, 4-6.

Those who have been baptized have been “risen with Christ (Colossians 2:12).” When one comes up out of the waters of baptism, he is a new creature, walking in newness of life. He has decided to dedicate his life to following Jesus the Christ to heaven. The Christian follower does not dwell on the “here and now”, but on the eternal reward, waiting beyond the sunset.

Just as it guided Noah, the providence of God will guide each faithful Christian through temptation and into salvation. God is all knowing, all-powerful, and ever present. God has given us some of His wisdom in the Bible, which we may study, growing thereby, to effectively shun the powers of Satan and immorality.

The Bible plainly declares, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” (Prov.14:34). The simplest explanation of “righteousness” is right doing. Right doing has been decreed by Almighty God and righteousness is declared in His word. The Psalmist said, “All thy commandments are righteousness.” (Psalm 119:172).

In America we have the opportunity of choosing our leaders by voting. What should be the primary criterion in voting for a national leader? One who will promise the most material things? One who generally promises but is reluctant to give details or specifics of how the promises will be fulfilled?

God’s people will, in light of righteousness exalting a nation, ask themselves: who will lead us in righteousness. Will his standard of righteousness be determined by the polls, or will it be determined by God’s word?

### **Qualifications of Leaders**

Competent leaders are those who KNOW the way. The way for people to travel in life has been revealed in the Holy Scriptures. The way to travel is not in man’s wisdom. “There is a way which seems right” but ends in death. (Prov. 14:12). Because, as the Holy Spirit said through Jeremiah, “O, Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”

If there has ever been a time in the history of the Lord’s church for leaders who know the way, that time is now. There is an acute need for leaders to understand the identity of the New Testament church, the church of Christ revealed in the New Testament. (Eph.3:1-6). There are leaders who seem determined to turn the Lord’s church into a “Johnny come lately” denomination. People need to know that a person can be saved by God’s grace through obedience to the Son of God, (Eph.2:8,9; Heb.5:8,9), and never join a denomination on earth. The Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47). It would be a vain quest to discover the denomination to which the Lord added the saved because there was not a denomination on earth when the Lord was adding the saved to the church, He was surely adding the saved to the church His son built (Matt. 16:18).

Dedicated leaders are those who not only know the way, they GO the way that people should go. The way to go is the “Highway of Holiness”. (Isa.35:8, NKJV). Jesus identified the “Narrow way” with a “strait gate”. (Matt.7:13,14).

God’s leaders live holy lives. They have been set apart from the world and consecrated to God. The apostle Peter, quoting from God’s Old Testament book about holiness, Leviticus, declared: “Be holy, for I am holy”. (1 Pet. 1:16). The age, or culture, does not control the lives of God’s leaders. The culture does not dictate the dress, the speech, the behavior in relationships, nor what is done in worship to leaders who are dedicated to the Lord.

### **Selecting Leaders**

Effective leaders know the way, they go the way, and they SHOW the way. Leaders can communicate God’s will. They are “able to teach” (1 Tim.3:2).

Christianity is a taught religion. (John 6:44,46; Matt.28:18-20). If true Christianity must be taught then someone must be “able to teach”. Effective leaders in the Lord’s church pay close attention to the preaching that is presented to the congregation. The effective leaders know what is being taught in Bible classes. These leaders know the danger of people getting in little “cells” or homes to study some material written by a prominent denominational leader, or some prominent preacher who has surrendered to denominational theology relative to salvation and/or worship.

Effective leaders will admonish those who are getting involved in denominationalism. If the admonitions are not successful, then the leaders will follow inspired instruction: “Reject a divisive man, (or, woman, TH), after the first and second admonition.” (Titus 3:10). If this instruction had been followed some churches now in turmoil and division could have been spared the heartache.

Leaders are not optional. Any grouping of people, a nation, an educational organization, or a church, will have leaders. The leaders may not be God’s kind of leaders, but they will be leaders.

fellowship with those who willfully sin (those who know better, but continue sinful living anyway), then we knock on Satan’s door and lead ourselves into temptation and possible condemnation. Our morals (or lack thereof) will be shown, among other ways, in those with whom we fellowship. Immorality is an age-old problem, dating back to the times of Noah, but is also shown in the New Testament times. Notice the apostle Paul’s inspired writings in Romans 1:29-32: Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

The Holy Spirit lists different forms of sin, or immorality. These same things that plagued the first century church continue to plague the 21st century church today. Notice verse 32, where the point is made that these people who do such things are aware of the judgment of God. The consequences of committing immoral actions are the wrath of God. The Bible says that those who do such things are “worthy of death”. Isn’t it interesting that the Holy Spirit saw it fit to include the fact that those who commit immoral actions find such to be pleasurable? Sin is enticing (James 1:12-17). Wickedness is brought about by the lusts of man. In James 1:15 the Holy Spirit, working through James, speaks of sinful lust that is conceived, and the fact that it “bringeth forth sin.” But we must not let our guard down by giving in to the lustful nature of wickedness. Verse 15 also states that “sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Sin and immorality, no matter how appealing, is not of God, but of the world (1 John 2:16).

### **GOD’S WISDOM IN SHUNNING IMMORALITY**

God saw the righteous light of Noah and his family shining in the corrupt world. God didn’t leave that light in the dark, but saved Noah by warning him of the forthcoming floods and telling him what he must do to avoid destruction. Noah was faithful and obedient, and was saved from the destruction of the wicked.

ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

The word grace means undeserved kindness. God shows toward us undeserved love and kindness every day through the blessings that we enjoy. God gave us the ultimate sacrifice — His only begotten Son — for our sins. He demonstrates that love by telling us how we may enter into heaven eternal: by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. Immorality cannot enter into heaven. There will be no sin there. 2 Peter 3:13 tells us that we “look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Only righteousness — No sin.

Immorality is the transgression of the law of God; it is sin. It can come in different shapes and sizes (as was noted above). It is the lack of morals and righteous customs. The people in the days of Noah had no morals. They lived as they pleased, rather than as God had commanded. No doubt each of these people influenced the others to continue living that care-free lifestyle. Noah understood that God expects obedience from His followers.

Noah realized that association with the people living worldly lives would drag him away from God. Notice the wise words of the inspired Proverbs writer in Proverbs 22:6. In this passage parents are charged: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Christian parents will instill within their children good morals by which to live. Noah was taught good morals that allowed him to live righteously among a world of the wicked.

The Holy Spirit, working through the apostle Paul, warns Christians today: “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners (1 Corinthians 15:33).” The American Standard Version translates this verse as follows: “Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals.” The word communications (KJV) is from the Greek word meaning to associate together, such as with a group or crowd of people. The Greek word for manners (KJV) or morals (ASV) is a strengthened form of the English word custom. Evil associations will corrupt good morals. Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica: “Abstain from all appearance of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:22).” Submitting our lives to God, we are to resist Satan, and he will flee from us (James 4:7). If we expose ourselves to unrighteousness in

It is vital to the success and *even to the survival* of a group of people to have God’s kind of leaders. Those leaders who know the way, who go the way, and who show the way.

The greatest leader that the world will ever know was the One who declared: “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6, NKJV).

## WISDOM CONCERNING THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

As traditional American values (i.e., biblical values) continue to be systematically jettisoned from our current culture, moral and spiritual confusion have been the inevitable result. This disorientation is particularly evident in the passionately held, conflicting viewpoints of the abortion controversy. On Monday, January 22, 1973, the United States Supreme Court ruled, in a 7-to-2 vote, that abortion—baby murder—would be legalized and made available on demand throughout America. Such abortions, stated the Court’s edict, could be performed up to and including the ninth month, with the doctor’s permission, if the physical or mental health of the prospective mother was deemed “at-risk.”

Since this fateful judicial decision, some forty-three million babies have been slaughtered in America (see “Consequences,” 2003). Now, every year in the United States of America, abortion doctors butcher more than one million children. Every year, an estimated forty-six million abortions occur worldwide (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2002). In three decades, an entire generation of children has been forever eliminated. In fact, more than 20% of all babies conceived in this country are killed before they ever see the light of day (Finer and Henshaw, 2003, p. 6)—and the slaughter continues....

A significant number of Americans consider abortion to be an acceptable option. What would one expect? They’ve been browbeaten with the “politically correct” agenda of the social liberals for decades. The highest court in the land has weighed in on the matter, making abortion legitimate by means of the power of “the law.” The medical profession has followed suit, lending its prestige and sanction to the

practice of abortion—in direct violation of the Hippocratic Oath. But have the majority of Americans heard the biblical viewpoint? Do they even care how God feels about abortion? Are they interested in investigating His view of the matter? After all, the Bible does, in fact, speak decisively about abortion in a host of passages, including Exodus 21:22-25, Ecclesiastes 11:5, Job 10:11-12, Psalm 139:13-16, Zechariah 12:1, Jeremiah 1:4-5, Galatians 1:15, Isaiah 49:1, Luke 1:36,39-44; 2:12,16. Such passages teach that God treats people as human beings even before they are born. They show that a pre-born infant is a person—a human being. There is no significant difference between a human baby one minute before birth and that same human baby one minute after birth. And that status as a human being applies to a person throughout his or her pre-natal development from the moment of conception. So in God's sight, whether a person is in his or her pre-birth developmental state, or in a post-birth developmental state, that person is still a baby!

If abortion is not wrong, Mary would have been within her moral and spiritual rights to abort the baby Jesus—the divine Son of God! Someone may say, “But that's different, since God had a special plan for that child.” But the Bible teaches that God has special plans for every human being. Every single human life is precious to God—so much so that a single soul is more significant than everything else that is physical in the world (Matthew 16:26). God sacrificed His own Son for every single human being on an individual basis. Each human life is equally valuable to God. The unrealized and incomprehensible potential for achieving great things by millions of human beings has been forever expunged by abortion. The remarkably resourceful potential of even one of those tiny human minds—now extinguished—may well have included a cure for cancer, or some other horrible, debilitating, and deadly disease.

This matter of abortion is a serious matter with God. We absolutely must base our views on God's will—not the will of men. The very heart and soul of this great nation is being ripped out by unethical behaviors like abortion. We must return to the Bible as our standard of behavior—before it is too late.

When one contemplates the passages examined above, and compares them with what is happening in society, one surely is

## IMMORALITY: THEN AND NOW

Genesis 6:5 simply states that the people of Noah's day were wicked. God didn't see it fit for us to know exactly what the wicked ones did, but more than likely a good representation of this their wickedness could be demonstrated in today's news. What we see in this period of Biblical studies is a world so wicked that it wasn't worth saving, with the exception of eight souls. Each of these sinful people had been created in the image of Almighty God, yet they had taken that image and soiled it to the point that it could not be identified. Notice some comparisons to Noah's time and our lives in the 21st century concerning immorality.

Noah was the head of a godly home. “And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt (Genesis 6:12).” Yet, eight souls stood out to the watchful eye of Jehovah God. As a result of the faithfulness of Noah and his family, God warned Noah of the upcoming destruction and gave him specific instructions by which he and his family would be saved. “By faith Noah, being warned of God... prepared an ark to the saving of his house... (Hebrews 11:7).” Noah's family was righteous. Immorality attacks the Christian home. Abortion plagues our society as a type of birth control. Yet, the moral that the Bible gives boldly and plainly teaches that life begins at conception (Luke 2:21). Homosexuality threatens the sanctity of marriage. God made them male and female (Matthew 19:4-5). Pornography is directly linked into our homes by way of the Internet, television, movies, etc. Modern-day T.V. shows become more and more sexually explicit. Television tells us today that it is all right to talk however you please. Hollywood tells us that it's all right to lie or cheat on a spouse, etc. The home is the first place attacked by such wickedness.

Noah was a just man (Genesis 6:9). Noah is described as a man who “walked with God.” God found favor with Noah. Hebrews 11:7 states that by his faithfulness, Noah “condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” By his example, Noah showed the sinful people of the world that they had no excuse to act as they had. Noah proved that righteousness was, in fact, attainable for the faithful follower of God. In direct comparison, notice the inspired words of Titus 2:11-12: For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying

of the flood. As a result of the faithfulness of Noah and his family, their lives were spared from the destructing torrent.

The world around him consisted of wrong-doing and immorality, but Noah was faithful. Hebrews 11:7 places Noah's name among others, known for their outstanding faith in God and His promises. Noah was mentioned with Daniel and Job as being a righteous person: "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job.., should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God." Noah was described as a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5). Noah provides for Christians today a righteous example of how to live in a world surrounded by immorality.

God's people are plagued every day by the threat of immorality. Careless corruption floods the halls of today's schools, work places, and even the home. With each day that passes on this earth, moral corruption increases and Biblical values are diminished. Yet, light remains at the end of the tunnel for Christians. God has not left His followers "in the dark" on such matters, but has provided faithful examples and Scriptures to guide the heaven-bound traveler.

### **MORALITY AND IMMORALITY DEFINED**

Webster defines the word moral as follows: "Of or relating to principles of right and wrong; conforming to a standard of right behavior; also: capable of right and wrong action."

A man with morals is willing to conform to the right principles and standard, he is righteous. Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8)." Noah was undoubtedly a man with morals. We would not hesitate to describe Noah as a virtuous man, very noble and principled (each of these words being synonymous to our topic of study, moral).

The definition of the word immoral is just the opposite of its root. Synonyms for this word include unrighteousness and wickedness. God looked upon the earth in the days before the flood and saw that man's heart was "only evil continually (Genesis 6:5)." This was a wicked and immoral world.

amazed and appalled. For example, women have been indicted and convicted of the murder of their own children when those children have been just a few months old. The news media nation-wide, and society in general, have been up in arms and outraged at the unconscionable behavior of mothers who have so harmed their young children so as to result in death. Most Americans have been incensed that a mother could have so little regard for the lives of her own children. Yet the same society and the same news media that are outraged at such behavior would have been perfectly content for the same mother to murder the same children if she had simply chosen to do so a few minutes or a few months before those children were actually born! Such is the insanity of a civilization that has become estranged from God. Such is the consequence of a society that places sex above sanity.

### **BABIES, EAGLES, AND THE RIGHT TO LIVE**

Ironically, the foundational principles of the American way of life, articulated by the Founding Fathers and subsequent spokesmen, speak to this matter. The Declaration of independence boldly declares: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (emp. added). The United States Constitution announced: "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America" (emp. added). The fifth amendment of the Constitution, in the Bill of Rights states: "Nor shall any person...be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law" (emp. added). And Abraham Lincoln, in the Gettysburg Address, reminded his audience: "Four score and seven years ago, our forefathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" (emp. added).

Yet, abortion advocates subtly shift attention away from the living status of the unborn baby to the "rights" and "choice" of the mother. Abortionists style themselves "pro-choice." The hypocrisy and utter

self-contradiction of such thinking is evident in the equally passionate stance on “animal rights.” Millions of dollars have been spent in recent years in attempts to “save the whales.” A “ruckus” has frequently arisen over the plight of endangered animal species, from the spoiled owl and the dolphin, to the Snail Darter in the Little Tennessee River. One electric power provider in Utah and Colorado was fined \$100,000, given three years probation, and ordered to retrofit its utility lines due to the occasional electrocution of protected bird species by its electric lines and equipment.

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act provides for the protection of two species of eagles by prohibiting the take, possession, sale, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase, or barter, transport, export or import of either eagle, alive or dead, including any part, nest, or egg without a permit. “Take” means to pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest, or disturb. Felony convictions for the violation of this act carry a maximum fine of \$250,000 or two years of imprisonment (or five years under the Lacey Act; “Bald Eagle,” 2002). Get this: A human being maybe fined a quarter of a million dollars and put in prison for five years for collecting eagle eggs, but that same person is permitted by federal law to murder an unborn human infant! Eagle eggs, i.e., pre-born eagles, are of greater value to society than pre-born humans! What more terrible, tragic inconsistency and incongruity could possibly exist in this country? Merely taking possession of an egg containing the pre-born American bald eagle—let alone if one were to destroy that little pre-birth environment and thus destroy the baby eagle that is developing within—results in a stiff fine and even prison time. Yet one can take a human child in its pre-born environment and not only murder that child, but also receive government blessing to do so! What has happened to our society? This cannot be harmonized in a consistent, rational fashion. The ethics and moral sensibilities that lie behind this circumstance are absolutely bizarre.

To view the preservation of animal life as equally important—let alone more important—than the preservation of human life is a viewpoint that is seismic in its proportions and nightmarish in its implications. Whatever one’s stance may be with regard to the environment and animal life, the blurring of the distinction between human and animal, so characteristic of the atheistic, humanistic, and hedonistic perspective throughout history, inevitably contributes to moral

This blessed boy will also see people that understand that love and trust are tied together. Because the people in his home love God and each other they know they can trust each other. In a word, they are *loyal*. The neurotic behavior of many “progressive” thinkers is altogether understandable. Think of the “stars” of popular culture, many of whom would not recognize the rational and caring existence that well-grounded people take for granted. How can they live soundly in the world they have created? A world without absolutes is a world without a sure foundation. It is a world where you can’t trust anyone and no one can trust you. This is the price for some of our progress.

Then there is the matter of tenderness. I use this word to describe the sense of care, consideration, and calm that abides in a home that is ruled by the truth and trust that is learned from God. The relationship between God and Jesus is that of a Father and a Son. It is a relationship from the home and it tells us how our homes should be. Jesus made use of this relationship in Luke 11. Fathers do not give their sons stones for bread or scorpions for eggs. Homes that are constructed the way God desires them to be are places of tender refuge. A godly home is the place where one is always welcome.

Truth, trust and tenderness are admittedly old, even ancient ideas. Indeed, they are timeless concepts. And there time has come... again.

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## God’s Wisdom In Shunning Immorality

By Robert Hatfield

Approximately 1,056 years after Adam was created, the world was in a horrible condition. “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5).” The wickedness of man grieved God at his heart. God said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth (Genesis 6:6).” But, in a world of wickedness, a single light shone through. Genesis 6:8 states: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” Noah was a just man, righteous in the sight of God *and* obedient to God’s commands. Noah was commanded to build an ark as a place of refuge from the waters

through Genesis 2:24: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

There is truth when it comes to the home. That truth begins with the realization that God made us and He created the institution of the home. Since God made us (Genesis 1:27) He owns us and the right to direct the way we should live. Since we are made in His image, He knows with profound intimacy how we ought to live. He created the home (the aforementioned Genesis 2:24). It follows that He has the authority (as its Creator) and the ability (as its source) to direct the way we live in the domestic environment.

In our day this matter of absolute truth and the home is not always well received. Matthew 19:9 contains a doctrine that is very restrictive: Jesus said that fornication is the only thing that is to end a marriage, except for death. People today want to divorce for many reasons. It is a clear matter of progress versus aged wisdom. Can any truly say that the fad of rampant divorce has helped this culture? Does it help the children? Does it help the deserted women? Certainly not. Divorce is most often an act of selfishness and if we go by God’s Book we will not do it.

We remember that our verse (Genesis 2:24) has in it a leaving and a cleaving. I am made to think about trust just here. Think of a boy growing up at home., what does he see? If the home is properly constituted he sees his mother and his father. If they are living by God’s will he will observe that they rely on each other, that they trust each other. He will see their love for each other. He will observe their interconnectedness. In a Christian home the boy will see the principles of Ephesians 5:22-6:4 being lived out right before his eyes. He will see them live lives of faith in God (Romans 10:17, 2 Corinthians 5:7). He will see them trust God by worshipping faithfully, giving properly, and thinking carefully. He will see them look beyond the here and now; he will see them live a life of trust and obedience. He will see people living a life that measures its good not by money or power, but by trust in God. And when he leaves his mother and father and cleaves to his own wife, what kind of home will he create? What kind of man will he be? If his parents trusted God, the great likelihood is that he will also.

decline, ethical desensitization, and the overall cheapening of the sanctity of human life. Instead of fretting over the potential loss of an alleged cure for AIDS or cancer due to the destruction of the rain forests, we would do well to spend that time weeping and mourning over the loss of millions of babies whose unrealized and incomprehensible potential for good has been forever expunged by abortion. The remarkably resourceful potential of those extinguished tiny human minds to have one day found a cure for cancer far surpasses the value of moss and fungi in some Third World rain forest.

If the right to life applies to birds, fish, and mammals—whether in pre-birth or post-birth form—how in the world can anyone arrive at the conclusion that pre-born human infants are any less deserving of protection? What person, in their right mind, would assign more objective worth to an animal than to a human? The abandonment of sense and sanity in assessing God’s Creation, with His endowment of humans with qualities that set them miles apart from animals, has led to the nonsensical and utterly irrational thinking that presently permeates civilization. The widespread societal sanction of abortion, along with other morally objectionable behaviors like illicit drug use, gambling, and the consumption of alcohol, have together gradually and insidiously chipped away at the moral foundations of America. In the words of former United States Court of Appeals judge, Robert Bork: “The systematic killing of unborn children in huge numbers is part of a general disregard for human life.... Abortion has coarsened us” (1996, p. 192, emp. added).

The ethical disharmony and moral confusion that reign in our society have escalated the activity of criminals who commit a variety of heinous crimes—killing large numbers of people, raping women, and doing all sorts of terrible things. Yet, a sizeable portion of society is against capital punishment. Many people feel that these wicked adults, who have engaged in heinous, destructive conduct, should not be executed—a viewpoint that flies directly in the face of what the Bible teaches (Romans 13:1-6; I Peter 2:13-14). God wants evildoers in society to be punished—even to the point of capital punishment. Yet, we will not execute guilty, hardened criminals, while we will execute innocent human babies! How can one possibly accept this terrible disparity and the horrible scourge of abortion?

It is absolutely imperative that people view reality from the perspective of the Supreme, Transcendent Ruler of the Universe. As Creator, He alone is in the position to define value and human life. God is spirit (John 4:24). He created humans in His image (Genesis 1:26). Humans are not animals. Humans possess a soul—a spirit. Animals do not. Unborn babies possess a spirit, and are regarded by God as *human* (Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:44). How dare we regard them any differently! The ultimate solution to every moral issue is genuine New Testament Christianity and the objective standard of the Bible. If all people would organize their lives around the precepts and principles presented in the Bible, civilization would be in good shape. No other suitable alternative exists. There is simply no other way to live life cohesively, with focus, with perspective, with direction, and with the proper sense of the purpose of life.

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## TRUTH, TRUST AND TENDERNESS ANCIENT WISDOM FOR THE HOME

By Bill Irby

There is an old saying among conservative folks: “Progress is not always progress,” Experience testifies to the truth of these words nowhere more strongly than in the domestic realm. Modern (and now “post-modern”) times have seen a trend toward the dissolution of the traditional family. Perhaps as many as half the homes producing children today do not have the mother and father of those children living in them. Men and women divorce with impunity. Young folks think nothing of living together without marriage. And in the most outlandish example of perverse “progress” there is the ridiculous movement to define marriage as being between people of the same sex. I fear for the day when someone decides they must marry a tree.

We know the source of all this so-called progress. It is the familiar demon of moral relativism. Just as soon as we decide that there is no right and wrong we have opened the proverbial barn door. And the door is most assuredly open these days. The answer to all of this is just as clear as the problem: We must return to the truth of God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:16–17) as the source for principles by which to live our lives at home. If we do not three things will happen: (1) We will lose our souls (2) Our families will be destroyed and (3) The larger society, which is based on the foundation of stable homes, will crumble.

The tragedy of the dissolution of the traditional home is made more regrettable by the fact that it is so avoidable. Folks just need to live by the Book. I know this may be seen as simplistic, but simple is frequently good. With this principle in mind let’s think about *aged wisdom for the home* in connection with these three concepts: (1) truth (2) trust and (3) tenderness. These ideas are woven in and