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The New Morality (Part 2) (Mar 1967)

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Why, What, And What Saith The Scriptures?

In our first article we discussed why it is that the New Morality is a harvest reaped today from the seeds sown yesterday. Now, I would like to outline to you what the New Morality is, and why it is important to know something of the devious pitfalls it presents to Christian young people.

This is not just a subject to catch the eye, or a daring article out of place in Christian literature. Neither is it a subject that affects only non-Christian young people as some would have us believe. It is vitally important to every reader of these pages, young or old. Christian young people are growing up in a secular society saturated with illicit sex, perversion, pornography, moral degeneracy, and drug induced degradation. Parents who are raising their children in such an atmosphere have a tremendous responsibility before God to grasp the seriousness of the situation, and to teach their children in a positive way the Word of God as it pertains to sex, marriage, and the home. God's Word asserts, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

Those with responsibility in our assemblies must no longer shirk this for they are accountable to the Lord for the teaching of the Scriptures on this subject, in a positive as well as a negative manner. The absence of such teaching in assembly life today invites disaster. We must begin to speak to the conscience and the need of

young people regarding the whole man: spirit, soul, and body. The Apostle Paul's concern for the Christians at Thessalonica was such that he prayed, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23). Not only must we teach this in our assemblies, but consistently, we must demonstrate in our lives that holy living which honours Christ and separates from the materialistic secular society that spawns the New Morality.

The New Morality, A New Interpretation

The term "The New Morality" is of fairly recent origin; it refers to a new interpretation of the Christian moral code that traditionally rests upon the Holy Scriptures. It is relevant, primarily, to sexual morality, but inevitably involves the total business and social ethics of man as well. It is new only because, as the Roman Catholic analysts of the new teaching affirm, it now has the seal of approval from a large segment of the clergy in the professing Christian Church, although it is as promiscuous in practice as anything before it.

The term "The New Morality" is the title of one of seven chapters in a book, Honest to God, by Bishop John Robinson of Woolwich, England (an acknowledged atheist), and which is produced in America by a denominational publishing house, the Westminster Press. The book has gained considerable notoriety, and has evoked comment both by the lay press and by religious magazines everywhere. It is the trade-mark of the large and growing group of men from many denominations of which Bishop Robinson is only one.

These men are influential in their way and vocal to the extreme; furthermore, they have had an untoward impact upon the life and conduct of an increasing segment of young people in Britain and America. I cannot help but think in this connection of the words of Paul to the Romans: “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” (Rom. 1:32).

The kernel of the ethic is this: a complete rejection of any divine sanction for any specific law, rule, or regulation relating to human behaviour as found in the Bible. The only valid test of the rightness or wrongness of any action, so it asserts, is whether or not it is inspired by love. Nothing of itself is wrong. Men have pushed the application of this idea to its limits, especially in regards to sexual morality. The quotations that I submit are sufficient to prove this:

“There are cases where sexual relations outside marriage are not wrong but glorifying to God” — Dean H. A. Williams, Trinity College.

“Christ nowhere suggested that marriage was the only place where sexual relations could take place” —Cannon Douglas Rhymes, Southwark Cathedral.

Bishop John Robinson rejects the Bible’s condemnation of homosexuality: “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was

meet" (Rom. 1:26-27). He rejects these strong words notwithstanding there are 2,000,000 overt homosexuals in Britain today who see the New Morality as their hope of ready acceptance into society. It is interesting to note that the Wolfenden report of 1957 recommending the legalizing of homosexuality in Britain under certain conditions, since the emergence of wide-spread Church support for the New Morality, has now become law.

Not Liberty But Licence

These men, and others, preach a new freedom from the moral law of God, and even try to deduce support from Paul's Epistle to the Galatians for the advocating of moral licence. They quote the statement of Matthew 22:39 as subsequent and superior to the Mosaic Law: "The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Love is confused with lust, and ethics become situational. Thus it is permissable to steal to feed a family you love, and it is right to commit adultery, providing of course, that the partnership in this illicit act be fulfilled by the love involved.

Surely, you say, such influences would never reach the lives of our assembly young people! The writer can testify from his contacts through assembly life and medical practice that such influences are already affecting the lives and conduct of some of our young people to varying degrees.

Young person, take heed! "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

In the final article of this series, we shall examine what the Scriptures teach young people about holy living and about overcoming the evil influences of this world. This teaching we shall illustrate from the experiences of three illustrious men of the Old Testament who stood in just such circumstances as have been described in our series.

The New Morality (Part 3) (Apr 1967)

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Why, What, and What Saith the Scripture

The ultimate answer to the challenge of the New Morality to Christian young people is to be found in the Word of God. Make no mistake about that! An awareness of the problem and an understanding of the facts involved is not enough. Let us see what God has to say from the Scriptures.

Six hundred years before the birth of Christ, Ezekiel the prophet of God, confronted the Children of Israel through their elders with God's perspective of their moral and spiritual decline. It is recorded in Ezekiel chapter 14 in some detail and is strangely akin to things today as described in the previous two articles. Verse three states that they had "set up idols in their heart and put the stumbling block of iniquity before their face." Verse 9 says that the prophets to which the people came to inquire of the Lord were "deceived." Even as today, the idols of materialism, the iniquitous stumbling block of immorality and the uncertain sound of deceived "God is dead" theologians swept all before them.

In such serious circumstances the Holy Spirit of God links together in a remarkable way the names of three great men from the Old Testament. These names appear linked in this fashion in no other chapter in the Bible. I think that the reasons will soon be obvious. Read God's message to Ezekiel the faithful prophet. (Ezekiel 14:13). "Son of man, when the land sinneth against Me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out Mine hand

upon it." Notice also verse 14 "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness saith the Lord God." These three men each overcame in one of the situations we have described above. The world, the flesh and the devil are the adversaries of the Christian young people. Noah overcame the world, Daniel overcame the flesh and Job overcame the devil. Let us find out how.

Noah, whose name means rest, was faithful to God in a world that Genesis 6:5 describes like this "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of his heart was only evil continually." It grieved God that He had made man. The Lord himself reminds us in Luke 17:26 that "as it was in the days of Noah so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man" — the last days — our days? It took a man of character to witness for God in those days and Noah was a man of character. Genesis 6:9 says he was a "just man and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God." The New Testament tells us that he was a preacher of righteousness and feared God. Noah was not afraid to stand as a minority in the world. As only one of eight who believed God in all his generation, he worked for God one hundred years by building an ark, and witnessed for God as a preacher of righteousness. What he did was consistent with what he said — for a hundred years in a hostile world! God is looking for young people with character who, like Noah, are willing to stand as a minority in this world, and not go along with the crowd. Are you willing to be a minority group by what you do as well as what you do not do in this world?

Too many Christian young people are becoming indistinguishable from the world in their conduct. To all

such let me turn you to Romans 12:1-2. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and per-feet, will of God.” The choice is yours. Either you gradually conform to the world’s manners, materialism, morals, and motives, or you are transformed by the renewing of your mind and prove God’s will for you to be good, acceptable and perfect. The secret of a renewed mind is the personal study of the Word of God. How much time do you spend each week in private and public study of God’s Word? Does a day or two go by without recourse to it’s pages? Does the assembly Bible Study find you absent? Christ said, “I have given them Thy Word,” “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:14 and 15). Psalm 119:9-11 reminds us again of the secret of success. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word.” “With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments. Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.”

God is looking for young people of character who, renewed by daily feeding on the Word of God, are willing to stand in a hostile world as a minority.

If Noah overcame the world, then Daniel overcame the flesh. Let me sketch in some interesting pertinent facts about Daniel and his times. His name means “my judge is God.” 2 Corinthians 5:10 reminds us that “we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that every

one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad." Daniel had every opportunity to succumb to the temptations of the flesh. He was young (probably early teens only) and suddenly found himself, because of the captivity, a long way from home where nobody knew him. His parents were not around to watch him. In addition he found himself in Babylon, a place of great iniquity where immorality and vice of every kind was rampant. Besides all this it appeared that his good prospects and favorable position back in Israel, had been rudely snatched away from him, and one could conceive of him thinking to himself about the injustice of it all. Here was the perfect opportunity to kick over the traces, and indulge himself in all the moral corruption that Babylon and the King's court had to offer. But he didn't do it! Why?

First of all Daniel had purpose of heart. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" (Dan. 1:8a). God is looking for young people with such purpose of heart. D. L. Moody said that the reason that the lions did not eat Daniel was that he was 9/10ths backbone and the rest was gristle. Spiritual and moral backbone can overcome the flesh.

Second, Daniel was willing to prove God. "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days and let them give us pulse to eat and water to drink" (Dan. 1:12). To those around, it must have seemed pretty tame fare compared with the king's meat and drink, but in the end, Daniel's faith in God's provision was justified, and he was successful. Are you willing to put God to the test and prove Him? "Prove all things: hold fast that which is

good. Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:21 and 22).

Third, Daniel prayed daily. "He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime (Dan. 6:10b)." Daniel was consistant in prayer in a very busy life. Are you? No time for prayer means no time for God and the resources He wishes to give you to overcome the flesh.

The results of Daniel's purpose, proving and prayer were evident in his life. The proof of this is very beautifully revealed in the words of a heathen queen (wife of King Belshazzer) in the time of the King's greatest need. She spoke to the King concerning Daniel in words like these; "There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy Gods" (Dan. 5:11a). Can the world tell by your life that "ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (1 Cor. 3:16)? Daniel was not a loser in material things because of his faithfulness to God. He was clothed in scarlet, wore a gold chain about his neck and became third ruler in the kingdom. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mark 6:33).

The third great Old Testament character of Ezekiel 14:14 was Job and Job overcame the Devil. His name means "persecuted." Make no mistake, young person, Satan is the source of the snare of immorality, materialism and false doctrine that confronts you today. Never underestimate him! "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Only the Saviour, who Himself was tempted by

Satan in the wilderness and overcame, can give you victory.

Satan will attack you in the same three ways he attacked Job, especially if you, like Job, are “perfect and upright and one that feared God and eschewed evil” (Job. 1:1b). Satan first made a direct frontal assault on Job and took away his health and wealth and family. If these had been Job’s idols, like so many of us he might have fallen, but instead we hear him reply, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21b).

Next, Satan tried to influence Job through his three friends. The friends we have and the company we keep have a profound influence for good or bad on each one of us. Christian young people — beware the friends you make and the company you keep. Satan will use unsaved girl friends and boy friends to your ill, but God can use spiritual companions to your good. Associate with those of like mind and faith. I in no wise advocate a spiritual isolation here, but warn of the dangers of close association with the world. Finally, Satan used Job’s very family circle to try to influence him to evil. Job’s wife suggested to him that he “curse God and die” (Job. 2:9b). The one we choose as a life partner must be one who knows Christ as Saviour and Lord. Otherwise the results are always disastrous. Job answered his wife in this fashion, “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips” (Job. 2:10).

Job was a rich man who lost every material thing, but who, faithful to God, overcame the testing of the devil in

this world's goods. The Bible reminds us that we, as Job, will not be the loser. "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (Job 42:12a). "Also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10b).

Follow the examples of Noah, Daniel and Job in "times like these" and God, who is no man's debtor, will bless you abundantly and cause you to stand. Look off unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith and make this your daily prayer;

Day by day dear Lord

—For these things I pray,

—to see Thee more clearly,

—to know Thee more nearly,

—to love Thee more dearly,

Day by day!