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Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth: July Report and August Sermons

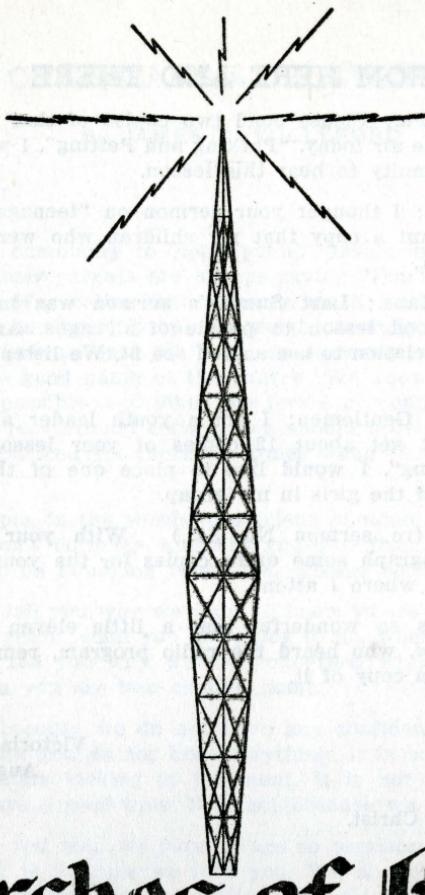
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Churches of Christ

SALUTE YOU

JULY REPORT
AND

AUGUST SERMONS
1958



FROM HERE AND THERE

West Chester, Pa.; Please send two copies of that wonderful sermon I heard over the air today. "Parking and Petting". I want our young people of my community to hear this lesson.

St. Joseph, Mo.; I thought your sermon on "teenage" petting was wonderful and I want a copy that my children who were in school at the time can read it.

Kansas City, Kans.; Last Sunday's sermon was most wonderful and should be a good lesson to people of all ages. Am enclosing a little token of appreciation to use as you see fit. We listen every Sunday when possible.

Bronx, N. Y.; Gentlemen: I am a youth leader and would like to know if I might get about 12 copies of your lesson No. 363 on "Parking and Petting". I would like to place one of these copies in the hands of each of the girls in my group.

Dallas, Texas (re sermon No. 343.) With your permission I would like to mimeograph some extra copies for the young people and also adult members where I attend.

The lesson was so wonderful that a little eleven year old boy visiting in my home, who heard the radio program, remarked that he would like to have a copy of it.

Victoria, B.C., Canada
August 25th, 1958

Brother Willeford
Highland Church of Christ.
Abilene, Texas

Dear Sir:

I had the privilege of listening to your excellent and timely broadcast, entitled "PETTING", on Sunday 24th.

This was one of the most timely and forthright addresses I have ever heard.

I should deeply appreciate it if you will be so very kind as to send me 2 (two) copies of this address, viz. "Petting", as I can put same to very good use.

I understand that your next broadcast will be on "Dancing" and I should also like to have two copies of that one when available.

Thanking you in anticipation of your kindness in sending me the above and congratulating you on your efforts to combat the prevalent juvenile delinquency in such an effective manner.

Sincerely yours,
(Name on file).

CHRISTIANS AT PLAY--NO. 2

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Sermon No. 340

August 3, 1958

It is quite customary to hear young people complain that their preacher and their parents are always saying "Don't do this," and "you can't do that." We realize that there is much truth in this complaint, but we do ask our young people to weigh carefully the advice of their preacher and their parents for both are sincerely trying to help youth and protect the good name of the church. We know that we should be as positive as possible, and when we forbid our children's participation in a particular recreational activity, we should provide something better to take its place. And yet there are times when Christian parents must say, "No,"

Young people, in the words of a friend of mine, "I want to tell you why we say 'Don't' so much, and why you hear from us, with what must seem to you to be annoying repetition, 'Please be careful.'

"I want to tell you why we want to know where you are going, with whom you are going, what you are going to do, when you will be home, etc. I want to tell you why we are concerned while you are out, and especially when you are late coming home.

"It is not because we do not have any confidence in you. It is not because we think you do not know anything. It is not because we think you are completely lacking in judgment. It is not because we do not want you to have a good time. It is not because we want to be killjoys.

"I will tell you why we parents are so persistent in trying to keep up with you. It is because we love you. We do not think the younger generation is 'hell-bent for destruction.' We think you are the greatest young people in the world, and we want to do everything we can to help you grow up into fine, useful citizens and faithful Christians.

"We are concerned about you because we know from experience the dangers that surround you. We are more sensitive to danger than you are. We also know from experience the temptations that lurk everywhere around you. We know you do not want to be protected, but we know from experience that you need the protection of loving parents.

"Young lady, when your mother says: 'Be good,' she is not saying: 'I don't trust you.' She is saying: 'I love you. I trust you. I know what temptation is. May God deliver you from its power!'

"Young man, when your father says: 'Please be careful,' he is not saying: 'You don't have sense enough to take care of yourself.' He is saying: 'I love you. I don't want anything to happen to you!'

"Teen-agers, let me say a word for mothers and fathers: We love you. You are the most precious possessions we have. All our hopes and aspirations for the future are wrapped up in you. We had rather die than lose you — physically, morally or spiritually.

"Every once in a while one of my boys says to me: 'I don't want to be a square.' Now, I am not sure I know what a 'square' is, but if it is what I think it is, I do not want him to be a 'square' either.

"No, teen-agers, we do not want you to be 'squares,' but we do want you to be **four-square** — honest, upright, honorable and good. We do not want you to be 'goody-good,' but we do want you to be good" (Bonds Stocks, in *Gospel Advocate*, August 11, 1957, p. 531).

We realize that in play activities there are opportunities for our young people to develop themselves in every good way, but the activities must be clean within themselves if they are to accomplish this purpose. Recreation will build our bodies and minds, but dissipation will destroy everything good that is within us. Let us be certain that our play activity is recreation, and not dissipation, for they are as wide apart as the poles.

Sometimes young people ask, "What kind of recreation is permissible for a Christian, and how may we know the difference between the right kind and the wrong kind?"

This is a good question, but it cannot be answered scripturally upon the basis of what one likes or dislikes. Some people want to determine the question of where they may go and what they may engage in purely upon the basis of what they like. We have heard of a man who thinks that a football game is born of Satan, but a rodeo was sent down from heaven. He does not like football, but he does like a rodeo. He tries to determine whether they are right or wrong upon the basis of his own attitude toward them, but, of course, that does not prove anything with reference to their being right or wrong.

There are other people who have the idea that if they can get somebody's approval for the things they want to do, then their activities will be entirely permissible and acceptable. They go about asking others, "What do you think of this?" or "What do you think about that?" and frequently these questions are asked without a sincere desire for a Scriptural answer. Sometimes when we ask, "What do you think about it?" we are asking for approval; we are seeking for self-justification. But the whole world cannot turn evil into good, nor make it less offensive to God.

The popularity of a practice does not make it right. Every civic club in town might sponsor it, and the whole town might approve it, and yet it might be utterly wrong in the sight of God. If a practice violates the principles of God's righteousness it is wrong, even though the whole world does approve it and the Lord has always forbidden His people to follow a multitude in the doing of evil (*Exodus 23:2*).

The Bible says we are to, "Abhor that which is evil," and that we are to "cleave to that which is good" (*Romans 12:9*). We are persuaded that most young people would heed this divine admonition if their senses were "exercised to discern both good and evil" (*Hebrews 5:14*). Our youth will usually follow in the steps of their elders, but if their elders will not stand up and be counted on the side of right, the young people are confused.

You may ask, "How can I know that an activity is evil?" In reply, we suggest three answers which we trust will be helpful.

First, we can know that an activity is evil if the Lord specifically condemns it within the Bible. We do not have to guess about many things, for the Bible says, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, no extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (*I Corinthians 6:9, 10*). Again, the Lord says, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (*Galatians 5:19-21*). It is evident that these activities, and others, are evil, for they are pronounced evil by the word of God.

In the second place, we can know that a practice is sinful if it bears **evil fruit**. Christ said, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (*Matthew 7:20*). When we begin to think about questions of what is right and what is wrong, we need to remember that God has not named everything that is wrong. If He had dealt with every problem and with all the questions that arise, the Bible might be too voluminous for us to read in a lifetime, much less to remember all that it might say.

We often hear people ask, "Where did God prohibit this; where did He condemn that? They seem to think that if He did not disapprove of some activity by name, it must be approved by Him. But where in the Bible did God say in so many words, "Thou shalt not gamble," "Thou shalt not be a bootlegger," "Thou shalt not look at obscene pictures," "Thou shalt not commit suicide," "Thou shalt not practice white slavery," or "Thou shalt not take dope"? And yet who would defend such practices? We all know they are sinful even though the Bible does not condemn them specifically. We know they are harmful by the evil fruit that they bear.

The Bible names a few of the most grievous sins, but it was written to set forth principles of right and wrong. It is up to us to learn these principles and to make the proper application of them in our own lives, individually and personally.

The third way we suggest for determining the right and wrong of

an activity is by asking ourselves a series of questions. Honest answers to these questions will bring out Bible principles and help us to see our play activities in their proper light.

First, we ask, "Does a particular activity destroy my identity as a Christian by causing me to be regarded as of the world?" For example, if you were to see me drinking liquor, you would not think: "Now that man must be a Christian!" My drinking would not have that effect upon you. The effect it would have would be this: "That man belongs to the world. That man is not serving Christ. That man is not a servant of God. That man is not a child of God. That man, if he professes to be a Christian, is not very sincere in his profession. His practice is far out of line with his preaching." And so if you thought of me at all in connection with Christianity it would be by way of a reflection upon it, rather than a credit to it.

The same thing would be true of gambling. If you were to see me gambling — whether it be on a five-cent slot machine, or a two dollar bet on a horse race, or a ten dollar bet on a baseball game, or a thousand dollar bet on the election — you would brand me as a man of the world. Regardless of the stakes, gambling is gambling, and it has always belonged to the world. It has always been identified with sin and unrighteousness and never with Christ and His church. And yet people today are looking lightly upon it and the practice is becoming more and more common in places of respectability. Various civic organizations think nothing of raffling off a car, and they expect the business people of the town to buy a chance. Not long ago two young ladies tried to persuade a friend of mine to make a contribution toward a bingo game. They were to have a bingo table at a school carnival and by playing bingo and giving away prizes to those who held the lucky numbers, they were to raise money for a certain cause. Now what is the difference between that and the roulette wheel? What is the difference in that and a gambling casino, or any other kind of gambling? What would be the difference between taking a chance in a bingo game where one gets a prize, and taking a chance in a poker game? There is no difference.

Gambling is wrong. It has always been wrong, and never has it been looked upon with any respectability whatsoever upon the part of those who love the Lord and are members of the church. The attitude of the church of the Lord toward it has not changed. Not one whit, and it would not matter if all the world gave approval to it, it would still be sinful. But the world demonstrates that it does not really approve it by its attitude toward church members who gamble. The world loses respect for such men.

And what we have said of drinking and gambling, may be said also of dancing. Dancing has never belonged in the realm of Christian activity. The testimonials against it are too many, the evidence is too strong. The fruit of it has been too destructive through the years. And

the world, in its sober moments, will acknowledge that it is harmful.

If you were to see an elder of the church upon the dance floor, what would your attitude be? Would you say that he must be a faithful Christian man in whom I should have the utmost confidence because I saw him dancing? Certainly not! You would say that that fellow has no business being an elder in the church. Why? "Because," you would reply, "I saw him doing a thing that no elder of the church should do." That would be your attitude and even dancing church members know that that would be their attitude toward it.

If dancing is Christian recreation, it should be all right for the preacher, but do you really think it is all right for the preacher? Do you? Do you think the preacher would be respected and trusted as a faithful Christian if he danced? If you had a dancing preacher and a group of dancing elders you would not call upon them for comfort and consolation when the trials and tribulations came upon you. You would not have any confidence in them, and you know it.

There is not a dancing member of the Lord's church in all the land who would want to see the preacher and elders dancing. Why? They know it would be a reflection upon the church of Christ and the religion of our Lord. If you think it is all right, let us have a dancing, drinking, gambling congregation, and see how much good we will do toward saving the souls of men!

The Bible says that Christ gave Himself for the church, "That He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27), and this He cannot do unless we who are members of it keep ourselves above reproach.

The second question I should ask myself is this: **Is the play activity questionable in my own mind and therefore an offense to my conscience?** Sometimes people ask, "Do you think it is wrong to do a certain thing?" One important answer to that question may be obtained by asking the one who raised it, "Do you think it is wrong?" If one thinks that a practice is evil, he may not scripturally engage in it? Why? Because he will violate his conscience if he goes contrary to it, and this is sinful within itself. The Lord says, "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:22, 23).

The Corinthian Christians were in doubt about going into a temple of idolatry to eat meat, and although they would not eat it as a tribute to an idol, they were concerned lest such a practice destroy their influence for righteousness. The Lord said to them, "If there is any doubt about it, you are not to do it; if you cannot eat it with a good conscience, you sin when you eat it."

The function of the conscience is to preserve self-respect by reminding us of our duty to do the thing we believe is right. It reminds us to refrain from doing what we believe is wrong. If we do the things we understand are right, our conscience will approve us, but if we do the things we understand are wrong, our conscience will reprove us. If we do what we believe to be right, our conscience will excuse us, but if we do what we believe to be wrong, our conscience will condemn us.

The conscience does not determine what is right and what is wrong, but it is a constant reminder that we are to do what we have been taught is right. Therefore, the conscience is a safeguard against sin, and when we violate it, we are breaking down our resistance to sin, and we are destroying the protection against sin that God has given us. This is the reason we must not engage in any activity when there is a doubt about it, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

The third question we should ask is, **Does the play activity in which I am engaged have a weakening influence on others, and will it become a stumbling-block to them?** There are people who say, "We do not care what others think about what we do," but if they care about what is right, they are concerned about the attitude of others toward their activities. Paul taught that if a man can eat meat in a temple of idolatry, and not violate his conscience, it was not wrong for him to eat it. But if the eating of such meat caused a weak brother to stumble and violate his conscience, it would be wrong for a brother who is strong in the faith to eat it. We are not to do anything that may encourage a weaker brother to violate his own conscience by following our example. If we do, the Lord asks, "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died?" And then the Lord adds, "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ" (I Corinthians 8:11, 12). The attitude of the right-thinking Christian is, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (I Corinthians 8:13). We are not to engage in any activity that will cause a friend or a loved one to offend his own conscience if he follows our example.

The fourth question we suggest is, **Do our play activities harm our bodies?** We are sometimes asked, "Is it wrong to use tobacco; is it wrong to smoke cigarettes?" If it harms our bodies it is wrong, and medical science has come very near the point of proving — if it has not actually proved it — that the use of tobacco does harm our bodies. Do we know that the doing of anything which is harmful to the body is a sin against God? The Bible teaches that if we are Christians, our bodies belong to God. The Lord asked the Corinthians, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body . . . Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor-

inthians 6:19, 20; 10:31). Any so-called recreation is wrong if it harms our bodies.

The fifth question we should ask ourselves is this: **Does my play activity bring me under weakening association and influence?** The Lord says that, "Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (I Corinthians 15:33). There is a law we all recognize and refer to as the law of assimilation. It says that we take into our beings a part of all that with which we constantly come into contact. A man cannot associate with evil all the time and not be affected by it. No matter how revolting profanity may be to a man, he can listen to it so much that it ceases to offend him. Sin and righteousness are both processes of education. We can educate ourselves to sin, or we can educate ourselves to do right. We should, therefore, be exceedingly careful about the influences that are brought to bear upon our hearts and lives, lest we engage in activities that will bring us into captivity to sin.

One other question we might ask about our play activity is, **Would Jesus do it?** We are told in the Bible to walk in His steps. Would He go where we go and do the things we do? Would we invite Him to accompany us, and be our guest in our play periods?

Sometimes people reason that although they have engaged in certain questionable activities through the years, no catastrophe has yet occurred, and so they feel safe. This may very well be, but it is not a safe course to take. Several years ago in Southern California newcomers began to build their homes in valleys which were flooded about every ten to fifteen years. Some of the natives tried to warn these newcomers about the danger involved. But they would not listen. After all, there were no clouds in the sky then, and the valleys were dry enough. So, thousands of dollars were spent on beautiful homes. For a few years all went well. Then a seasonal cloudburst caused the dry gulches to fill up and the water rushed down the mountain sides to overwhelm these houses, even taking the lives of some of the owners. We would be inclined to say that these people were foolish for not heeding the warning they were given, but they were not nearly as foolish as those of us who build our spiritual houses in the valleys of doubtful and questionable activities. We may seem to do all right for some time, but after a while the storms of temptation will sweep down upon us, and our houses will disintegrate.

Therefore, we ask you and your loved ones to build your house upon the rock of God's word. It will never fail you, and it will bear you up through all the years. You can build on that rock by placing your trust in Christ, repenting of your sins, and being baptized into God's Son. After becoming a Christian, it will be your privilege to walk in the steps of the Master, and to honor Him who loved you enough to die for you.

THE PARABLE OF LEAVEN

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 341

August 10, 1958

Possibly there was never a time when men were more interested in the study of governments than now. Civil government has been made a textbook in all our common schools, and every school boy and girl is being taught what his government is like. Almost daily the newspapers give us glimpses and partial pictures of what other governments are like. Books of travel are devoured with eagerness; diplomats who are to go to other countries burn midnight oil in their efforts to understand the governments of those countries. This is well if it is balanced with other things. But when we see school children, parents, business men, politicians or diplomats more eager and laborious in their efforts to understand the temporal governments of the world than they are to understand the kingdom of God, then something is radically wrong. I should like to know what all the kingdoms of the world are like, but I had rather know what the kingdom of God is like than to know them all.

We can know what the kingdom of heaven is like by studying the parables of our Lord. He goes to the sower in the field, to the busy housewife kneading her dough, to the wheat field overgrown with tares, to the pearl hunter sailing over the boundless main, to the fisherman with his dragnet, to the fig orchards, to the builders, to the marriage festivities, to the toilers after riches, to the wandering prodigals, to the slave and master, to the dark earth where the seed grows secretly, to the weary searchers after lost property, to the faithful servants and to deceivers, to labors in the field, and to watchmen on the wall, and from each of these He points out some beautiful outline of the kingdom of God.

In one of our Lord's parables, He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matthew 13:33). In this parable Christ directs our attention, first, to the kind of change which Christianity works in the world. Our Lord here teaches that the change which His kingdom brings about in the world is a change, not so much of the outward form, as of the spirit and character of things.

Leaven does not alter the shape of bread, nor change the size of the loaf. When the dough is baked it will retain whatever shape the baker gives it, but the leaven will alter the character of it. It will make the bread more tasteful, more nourishing, and more wholesome. The shape of the loaf is retained, but with leaven added it is different bread. The leaven works from within and changes the whole character of the loaf.

PARABLE OF LEAVEN

Page 11

And so it is with the change which Christianity brings about in the world. The coming of the kingdom of heaven does not consist in an entire alteration of human life as we now know it. It comes not with observation, but is within us. It does not alter empires into republics, it does not abolish work and give us all ease, it does not find fault with the universal frame of things, or refuse to fit itself in with the world as it is, but it accepts things as it finds them, and leavens all it touches. As the outward forms and framework of the world's business would be little altered if all men were suddenly to become absolutely truthful or absolutely sober, so the change which Christ proposed to bring about was of an inward, not of an outward kind. It was a change first in the individual, and only through the individual on society at large. Our Lord, in establishing a kingdom on earth, did not erect a vast organization to compete with the world, but He introduced into the world itself a leavening influence which should rule and subdue all to His own Spirit.

The parable of the leaven illustrates, in the second place, the method by which the kingdom of heaven is to grow, or, as we might say, by which the whole world is to be Christianized. To one who considers the probable future of any new or young force in the world, there will occur several ways in which it may possibly prevail. It may so commend itself to the common sense of men, or it may so appeal to their own interests, as to win universal acceptance. Railways, banks, insurance companies do not heed statutes compelling men to use them; they win their way by their own intrinsic advantages. There have been governments so wisely administered that men not naturally subject to them have sought to be taken under their protection for the sake of advantages they could afford. Some kingdoms have thus been largely extended, but more commonly they have been extended by the sword, by the strong hand. But Christ would not have His kingdom extended by force. And yet the idea that men can somehow be compelled to accept the truth seems never to be quite eradicated from the human mind. Very slowly it is recognized that to support a religion by any kind of force instead of by reason alone is to admit that reason condemns it.

The spread of Christianity is illustrated in this parable by the leavening of a mass of dough. The bakerwoman in Christ's day, instead of using soda or baking powder, as our women do for our bread, used a piece of the old dough left from the last baking. The leaven from the old dough would spread by contagion throughout the mass of fresh dough, and one of the wonders of leaven is that when kept in proper surroundings it never runs out.

So the leaven of the gospel spreads from heart to heart. It may be smothered out in a heart that has already transfused it to others, but from these others it will go on in its magic work.

God works through natural means in spreading the borders of His kingdom, and the natural means pointed out in this parable is personal influence. Our Lord bases His expectation of the extension of His king-

dom throughout the world not upon any grand and powerful institutions, and not upon governmental assistance, but upon the secret, unnoticed influence of man upon man.

And indeed there exists no mightier power for good or evil than personal influence. Even those who least intend to influence you and seem least capable of it have a tremendous bearing upon your life. The little child that cannot stand alone will work that tenderness in the heart of a ruffian which no acts of parliament or prison discipline have availed to work. The wail of the suffering infant will bring a new spirit into the man whom the strongest police regulations have tended only to harden and make more defiant and embittered. Or take those who have been pushed aside from the busy world by ill health or misfortune—have not their unmurmuring patience, their Christian hope, their need of compassion done much to mold our attitudes? Have they not imparted to us the spirit of Christ and developed within us a recognition of what is truly important in this world?

But what does the parable of the leaven teach us regarding the operation of our influence? It teaches us, first, that there must be a mixing of those who are and those who are not the subjects of Christ. Manifestly, no good is done by the leaven while it lies by itself; it might as well be chalk. It must be mixed with the flour. So must Christians be kneaded up together with all kinds of annoying and provoking people that the Spirit of Christ which they bear may be spread to them. Had our Lord not eaten with publicans and sinners; had He shrunk from the rough and irreverent handling He received from coarse men; had He secluded Himself in the home of friends at Bethany; had He not made Himself the most accessible Person in Palestine, little of His Spirit would have passed into other men.

Other things being equal, the effect of Christian character varies with the thoroughness of the mixing. It is so with all personal influence. The closeness of the mixing, the frequency and thoroughness of the intercourse between men is the measure of the effect produced. And precisely as a contagious disease passes from man to man, with inconceivable and sometimes appalling rapidity, so does evil or good influence spread itself with as certain and speedy an increase. There is no quarantine for the moral leper, nor any desert in the moral world where a man can be evil for himself alone.

This mixing with others in the world is provided for in various ways. It is provided for by nature which sets us in families and mixes us up in all the intimacies of domestic life, and by society, which compels us, in the prosecution of our ordinary callings, to come into contact with one another. One part of the world is mixed with other parts by commerce, by colonization, by conquest, so that there exists a ceaseless giving and taking of good and evil. The apostle Paul recognized that the Lord's people would have to "rub elbows" with all kinds of people in the world, and so he said to the Corinthians, "I wrote

unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world" (I Corinthians 5:9,10).

But beyond the unavoidable contact with our fellowmen to which we are all compelled, there are voluntary friendships and associations into which we enter, which we might, if we chose, avoid. It is such close and intimate contact with evil men that the Lord warns against when He says, "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (I Corinthians 15:33).

The Lord does not forbid the Christian's association with the world, but He does expect him to leaven it instead of being leavened by it. Before a Christian engages in any amusement or occupation, he should ask, "Can it be leavened for good, and can it be leavened by me? Can it be engaged in in a right spirit, and am I sure enough of my own spiritual stability to engage in it with benefit to me and to others?" A man who is strong physically may come out of a sick room unscathed while a man who is weak physically may come out carrying the infection and spreading it to others. It is foolish to argue that one man's ability to overcome certain evil influences is proof that we can all overcome such influences. You would not so argue with reference to the possibility of contracting some infectious disease.

The parable of leaven teaches that Christians must mix to some extent with the people of the world; otherwise we could not leaven them. But many of us shrink from the responsibility of influencing the life of another person. We are afraid of incurring the hazardous responsibility of making a man a Christian. Perhaps we shrink from such responsibility through a feeling of hopelessness about others. They seem so disinterested in the Lord that we feel as if they could never be leavened. But the parable of the leaven reminds us that while it is impossible to leaven sand, so long as the meal remains meal it may be leavened. And so long as men remain men it is still possible to leaven them.

Some of you may ask: Besides mingling with society and joining freely in all the innocent ways of the world, what is a Christian to do in order that his Christianity may be communicated to others? The answer is that he is to be a Christian. He is not to be anxious to show himself a Christian, but to be careful to be one. It has been wisely said that the true method of doing good is to be good, to have a character that will of itself communicate good. This is the very teaching of the parable of the leaven, which says, "Be a Christian, and you must make Christians. Be leaven and you leaven." The leaven does not need to say, "I am leaven," nor to say to that which lies next to it, "Be thou leavened." The best way of leavening those around us is to be what we wish others to become.

Do not turn the warning of this parable aside by the thought, Am I my brother's keeper? Most assuredly you are responsible for your own

character and for all its effects. If you are not doing good to others, it is because there is something wrong in yourself. If you are not leavening others, it is because you are yourself unleavened, for there is no such thing as leaven that does not impart its qualities to that which is about it. Can you confine the perfume to the flower, or restrict the light of the sun to its own globe? Just as little can you restrain all Christian qualities within your own person. Something essential to Christian character is lacking if it be not influencing those about it.

A little leaven leavens much and one Christian may influence many with whom he comes in contact. Not only does the kingdom of God leaven one heart, but it makes each leavened heart a lump of leaven that can perform wonders. One sinner saved, his heart burning within his breast, as he consciously communes with his Savior, touches another heart and sets it all aglow. These two move an entire congregation into throbbing activity, and the congregation's zeal infects a whole city, and the city so infected communicates its fervor to the land, and a nation thus on fire kindles another by its far-reaching influence beyond intervening seas.

Christ said the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal. Leaven works silently and invisibly as it spreads through the dough. There is no sound to be heard—nothing to draw attention to its work. And just as silently does God carry on His work, whether in the heart of a Christian or in the church itself.

Some Pharisees once asked our Lord when the kingdom of God should come. And He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or Lo, there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

Some think there must needs be a great stir and noise when a soul is converted to God—that the change must be seen by all. But does Holy Scripture lead us to look for this? Does the parable of our present study hint at it? No, just the reverse. What can be more silent and hidden than the working of yeast in a mass of dough? We are sure there is a work of grace oftentimes begun in a person's heart when others know nothing of it. Is it not so in the works of nature? The dew descends quietly and unobserved, and we do not see or hear it falling. The break of day steals on silently; there is no thunder clap to announce it. When the temple of Solomon was being erected, we read that "there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." Yes, and God's saving work in a soul is a hidden work. The dew of His blessing comes down gently with its refreshing and renewing power. The dawn of a new life breaks silently upon the soul. The spiritual temple is built up without any outward signs of what is going on within.

And if God is carrying on a work of grace within us, is it not well that that work should go on quietly and without notice? Is it not more

likely to be a sure work, a real work, a lasting work? The shallow stream usually makes a rushing sound, but the deep river flows noiselessly. And so it is with spiritual things.

The gradual changing of the meal by the leaven is a parable of the gradual change in the human heart by the leaven of the kingdom. There are some who claim that the gospel does its work suddenly, and that they are perfected all at once. But this teaching is hardly worth repeating. All experience brands it as false, and even the experience of those who claim the doctrine proves it unfounded.

In the parable Christ said the leaven worked "till the whole was leavened." It does not stop until it transforms and renews the whole lump—all the meal with which it is mixed. And in like manner the kingdom of God does its work effectually in the soul. The whole inner man is influenced by it, and the whole character undergoes a change. Our thoughts, our desires, our feelings, our words, our life is altered by it. In short, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

But the grace of God works effectually in another way. It does not arouse and awaken the heart, and then leave it. It goes on working till the work is completed if you will permit it. We see this in the parable of the leaven as it goes on working until every particle of meal is leavened. God will not leave you nor forsake you. He will perfect your spiritual life. Have you begun to feel your soul moved by the love of Christ? Are you beginning to take a greater interest in His word? Do you find a comfort in prayer, which you have neglected in the past? Ah, men may think this will pass away and come to nought, but no, not if it be a genuine work of grace prompted by God's word. The world may come in like a flood and almost smother your religious feelings. Your hope may be dimmed for a time. Satan may tempt you sorely and try hard to bring you once more under his power. But if God is on your side He can and will carry you through. Look up, then, and be encouraged. Remember that "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Christ."

One of the strange things of the ages has been the endless effort of men to turn the base metals into gold. They have taken metals like copper, iron, zinc, and lead, and have mixed them in all proportions. Then they have subjected these mixtures to every temperature from that of the heat of sunshine to the heat of the blast furnace. They have hoped and worked on, but each time the metal has come out of the furnace, but not gold.

But stranger than that of transforming the base metals into gold is that power of the kingdom of heaven to turn the debauched life into a noble man; to make a man while yet on earth a citizen of heaven. The leaven of the kingdom can turn evil into good, weakness into power, despair into hope, poverty into riches, sorrow into song, hate into

love, crying into laughter, bondage into freedom, death into life, and time into eternity.

Take the man whose vision has never been lifted higher than the earth, who deceives, debauches and defrauds, who looks upon birth and death as the extremes of man's opportunities and hopes, and put the kingdom of God into that man. His worldliness will be turned into godliness. Take the man who has sought and acquired all that earth can give him and who has found satisfaction in none of these, who yet has an aching void in his heart. Put the leaven of the kingdom into his heart, and in the midst of his despair songs will break forth. Instead of the tempest in his soul, there will steal in an abiding peace that nothing can take away. Let lions loose, let war devastate, let hatred wreak its rage, let rocks and storms assail, but they cannot rob he Christian of his peace.

It is a glorious consummation of which the parable of the leaven speaks. It tells of a mixing that is to go on till "the whole" is leavened. The Spirit of Christ is to pervade all things. In His kingdom is to be gathered all that has ever served or gladdened humanity: the freshness of childhood, the wisdom and self-command of age, the enterprise and capacity of manhood, the qualities that suffering matures, and those are nurtured by prosperity; all work that has stimulated and rewarded the energies of men, all modes of human life, and all affections that conscience approves, all that is the true work, joy, and glory of good men is to be pervaded with the sanctifying, purifying, elevating leaven of Christ's Spirit.

And this is to be achieved through the leaven of personal influence. It is possible that you should have no desire to help in this, that you should be in the world of men and not care to see the kingdom of God accomplishing this destiny, that you should know the earnestness of Christ in this behalf, and never lift a finger or open your lips to aid Him? Surely it will pain you to come to the end of life and realize that not one soul has been effectually helped by you. Would you not save many if by a wish you could lift them to the gate of heaven? Is it, then, because of the little labor and sacrifice that are needed for this purpose that you hold back from helping? Is there nothing you can do, is there nothing you should do in the way of leavening some little bit of the great mass of humanity? Yes, negligent Christian, there is something you can do, but you must come back yourself to the leaven, cultivate diligently that fellowship with Christ Himself, which is alone sufficient to equip you for this great calling. Make your calling and election sure, and then whatever you do, say, or touch will all be leavened for righteousness.

Sinner friend, you can leaven the world for good and leave it a better place than you found it, but to do so you must become a Christian. This you do through faith in the Lord, repentance from sin, and baptism into Christ. We invite you to contact a minister in any church of Christ near you or to write or wire us and we will assist you in your obedience to the gospel of Christ.

THE TWIN PARABLES

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Sermon No. 342

August 17, 1958

The Lord said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matthew 13:44-46).

These two parables, the hidden treasure and the costly pearl, are so much alike in the lessons they teach, that we will consider them together. They are twin parables, and yet, as with twin children, they have their individual characteristics. They teach the same truth but they teach it with distinct differences. The resemblances and differences can best be shown as they are studied together.

These twin parables exhibit on the one hand the intrinsic preciousness of the kingdom, and on the other the high esteem in which it is held by the seeker who finds it. They set forth first how valuable the kingdom of God is, and next how much it is valued by those who know its worth.

These parables teach that the kingdom of God was not designed to benefit the world only, but that it is to benefit each individual. It is not merely a tree overshadowing the earth, or leaven leavening the world, but each man must have it for himself, and make it his own by a distinct act of his own will. He cannot be a Christian without knowing it. He may indeed come under the shadow of this great tree, and partake of many blessings of its shelter; he may dwell in a land which has been leavened with the leaven of truth, and so in a degree he may share in the universal leavening. But more than this is needed. He must himself be a citizen of the kingdom if he is to partake of its blessings.

Both of these parables speak of the incomparable value of the kingdom. In one parable it is described as "a Treasure," and in the other as "a Pearl." Thus the Lord teaches that there is a treasure, placed within our reach in this world, rich beyond all comparison or conception — a treasure incorruptible and undefiled and unfading. By means of the kingdom a channel has been opened through which streams from the fountain of God's love flow down to this distant world. Through the Son of God divine mercy reaches our nature, and supplies our needs. Through the ministry of the Spirit, in revealing God's will, the refreshing water was brought into contact with parched lips. Truly, a heavenly treasure lies on this poverty-stricken, bankrupt, accursed world, sufficient to enrich every one of its poor and miserable and wretched and blind and naked inhabitants.

TWIN PARABLES

We can see the value of the kingdom in the price that Christ paid for it. The Bible says that Christ purchased the church "with his own blood" (Acts 20:28), and that He "gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

Again we see its value when we remember that Christ says He will save His spiritual body, the church (Ephesians 5:23), and that when He returns He will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father (I Corinthians 15:24). The very fact that Christ will save the church, and deliver it from the world is proof that it is a treasure of surpassing value.

The kingdom of God is a precious treasure because in it there is spiritual liberty. Our shores have been invaded by a relentless enemy, and we have been marked for death. The tribute which Satan has exacted is nothing less than our wealth, our loved ones, our hopes, our bodies, our souls and our rights to eternal joy. We are in a bondage cruel and dark, and there is one kingdom alone that is strong enough to deliver us. It is the kingdom of our God, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13).

We speak of friendships in the kingdoms of men, but the same crowd that will crown today, will crucify tomorrow; we speak of riches, but they are riches which "like scared fowls on the margin of a ready lake, take wings and fly away"; we speak of earthly hope, but it is bordered by the sepulcher; we speak of home, but it is a home whose walls crumble, and whose inmates perish; we speak of joy, but it is the joy like the beauty of a rainbow, it fades quickly. Yes, there is only one lasting treasure in this world and it is the kingdom of God.

What are the treasures of earth compared with this? If we could own all the gold in Fort Knox, all the pearls at the bottom of the sea, and if we had all the riches of Solomon, what could they do for us? Would they make us happy? Could they ensure to us health, and strength, and length of days? Could they give peace to a restless conscience? And even if they could do all this for us, how long would it last? For a few years at most, and then we must part with them, and that for ever. We cannot take our money with us. It would only mock us on our death-bed, and be a burden to us in our dying hour. The Lord knew this, and therefore He said, "Labor not to be rich." The apostle Paul knew it too, and he gave this advice to Timothy, "Thou, O man of God, flee these things."

What then is there, which is really valuable? What is that treasure, which is more precious than all else? It is the salvation of the soul—eternal life—the possession of Christ. For such a treasure who would not gladly sing?—

Thou hope of every contrite heart,
Thou joy of all the meek,

TWIN PARABLES

To those who fall how kind Thou art,
How good to those who seek.

But what to those who find? Ah, this
Nor tongue nor pen can show!
The love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know.

(The hymn "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," by Bernard of Clairvaux; quoted in *The Parables of Jesus*, by Geo. A. Buttrick).

The twin parables represent the kingdom of heaven as hidden, and therefore difficult to find. Jesus said it is "like a treasure hidden in the field." In the Old Testament era the kingdom was hidden in types and shadows, but even through these the halo of its unseen glory excited the hopes and attracted the steps of every generation. Down through the patriarchal and prophetic ages it continued a hidden treasure, and in the New Testament the apostle Peter says, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (I Peter 1:10, 11). In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul informed them that he was writing so they could read and understand the mystery of Christ, "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is not revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:5).

The treasure was hidden throughout the Old Testament age, but even when Christ through these parables taught His disciples in Galilee, His kingdom was still hidden. A few fishermen, and here and there a ruler, discovered His meaning when He said, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you," but to the multitude the treasure was still unknown. The light was near them, and yet they did not see; the riches of divine grace were brought to their door, and yet they continued poor and miserable.

But even after the Lord had fully declared His mission, and finished His work; after He had died for our sin, and risen again for our justification; after His disciples had published the glad tidings in many lands, the treasure still lay hidden. It was near, and yet out of sight. Felix was near it when, shut in between his own sin and God's righteousness, he trembled at the sight of the judgment-seat. Agrippa was near it when, caught and carried away ere he was well aware, by the close, clearing reasoning of Paul, he was almost persuaded to be a Christian.

And are not heavenly things entirely hidden from some of us? We can see no beauty and no glory in them. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine

unto them" (II Corinthians 4:4). And the apostle declares that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:14).

How sad, that there should be salvation for us all; and yet that so many of us should pass it by, like a man who is working in a field where there lies a treasure just below the surface, but he cannot see it! Oh, that we would open our eyes, and seize the prize so freely offered to every one of us!

But some do find the treasure, and the twin parables suggest two different ways that it is found. The first parable illustrates the eagerness of a poor man who comes upon the treasure apparently by accident; the other illustrates the eagerness of a rich man whose finding of the pearl of great price is the result of carefully studied and long sustained effort. One man stumbled upon the treasure; the other discovered the pearl by an unremitting quest.

In the first of these two parables, we see how the kingdom of heaven is sometimes found by those who happen upon it unaware, neither expecting nor looking for it. When the man went out into his field, perhaps to plough, he was not looking for hidden treasure, and he never expected his ploughshare to turn up a chest full of gold. He went out in the morning never expecting that before nightfall his fortune would be made, but suddenly, without effort or expectation, he sees untold wealth within his grasp. He knows nothing of the history of the treasure, nothing of the long hard strife by which these gold pieces were acquired, and nothing of the disaster which tore them from the reluctant hand of the possessor. He can imagine the careworn man when trouble and war overran the land, stealing out in the darkness and making his treasure secure, and marking it by signs which he was never again to see, but he knows nothing of the man or his ancestors. Ages before this treasure had been hidden; for the finder it had been prepared without any intention or labor of his own, and now he has found it!

So, says our Lord, is the kingdom of heaven. Suddenly, in the midst of other thoughts a man is brought face to face with Christ, and while earning his daily bread and seeking for no more than this life can give him, unexpectedly finds that eternal things are within his grasp. There are those of whom God says, "I was found of them that sought me not" (Romans 10:20). Is it not often so? A man has begun life not thinking that any very great thing can be made of it, and he fancies that no better thing can come to him than houses, lands, wife and children, friendships and prosperity. He only thinks of what he can make of life, not of the wealth God has laid in his path. But suddenly his steps are arrested, and circumstances that seem purely accidental break down the partition that has hemmed him in to time, and he sees that eternity is his.

How is it that the eyes are now opened to this treasure? Why did he not see it before? Perhaps a few words casually dropped by a Christian, a sentence read in an idle moment, or a gospel sermon some friend asked him to hear, may have opened his eyes. This morning he was content with what a man can have outside of God's kingdom; this evening everything outside that kingdom has lost its value and is as nothing.

The parable of hidden treasure shows us that there may be a finding without any previous seeking, and that the essential thing is, not whether a man has been seeking, and how long and how earnestly — no, but whether a man has found. The man in the parable would not have found more in that spot had he been seeking more and seeking it all his days. The buried money was not accumulating interest. The very same treasure may be found by the man who has grown gray in the quest of treasure, and by the child who plays in the field.

The second parable sets forth the merchantman who refuses ever to be satisfied until he has the best. He sets out with the conviction that there is something worth seeking, worth the labor and search of a life, something which will abundantly repay us, and to which we can wholly, freely, and eternally give ourselves. He refuses to be satisfied with the often interrupted and often quenched joys of this life. He considers physical health, the respect of his fellowman, a good education, and a good social position, as all goodly pearls, but he is not satisfied with these things if there is anything better to be had. He refuses to have anything short of the best. Money is good, he at first thinks, but knowledge is better, He parts with one to get the other. Friendship is good, but love is better, and he cannot satisfy himself with the one, but must also have the other. The respect of his fellows is good, but self-respect and a pure conscience are better. Human love is a goodly pearl, but this only quickens him to crave insatiably for the love of God. He must always have what is beyond and best. He believes that God has not created us to be partially satisfied, but to be partakers of His own blessedness, and to enjoy eternally the sufficiency of Him in whom are all things.

This spirit of expectation is encouraged by the parable of the pearls. It says to us, "Covet earnestly the best gifts." Never make up your mind merely to endure or merely to be resigned. Test what you have, and if it does not satisfy you wholly, seek for something better. You are to start with the belief that you are not made for final disappointment, nor to rest content with something less than you once hoped for or can now conceive, but that there is somewhere, and attainable by you an absolute good, a pearl of great price, in the possessing of which you shall be blessed and find the satisfaction of all your longings. You are to start with this belief and hold to it to the end. In the face of no disappointment give up the persuasion that the pearl of great price is to be had, and to be had by you, for the Lord says "he that seeketh, findeth."

The merchantman in the parable never surrendered the quest. Many goodly pearls were his, but he sought persistently the best pearl. The efforts of this man are well told in that old story of the Holy Grail. One knight, riding on the quest, came to a singing brook, deep meadows, and laden fruit trees but even as he ate the fruit it turned to dust. No feeding of the body could satisfy the soul. Riding on he found a gracious woman and a home. Surely the love of a woman and the sweet shelter of a home was what he wanted. He said, "But when I touched her, lo! she too, fell into dust and nothing, and the house became no better than a broken shed" (Tennyson's "The Holy Grail"). Only the Holy Grail could satisfy the knight of old.

We have another example of this seeking spirit in Justin Martyr's account of his own conversion, given in his first dialogue with Trypho, in which he tells how he had traveled through the whole circle of Greek philosophy, seeking everywhere for that which would satisfy the deepest needs of his soul, and ever seeking in vain, till he found it at last in the gospel of Christ.

There is but one pearl of great price — the kingdom of God, and the kingdom possessed restores that unity to the heart of man, which sin had destroyed. The heart which had been as a mirror shattered into a thousand fragments, and every fragment reflecting some different object, is now reunited again, and the whole reflects the one image of God.

The twin parables teach that we must be willing to give up all for the kingdom. Though there are various ways of finding the kingdom, there is only one way of entering into full possession of it. The finder of the hidden treasure sold everything and bought the field, and the merchantman bartered his whole collection of goodly pearls for the "pearl of great price."

The teaching which our Lord conveys in these parables is the incomparable value of the kingdom of heaven, and the readiness with which one who perceives its value will give up all for it. We have it not at all unless we have given all for it. It is like a choice between living in the town or in the country. We know we cannot do both, and in order to secure the advantages of one we must give up the other. So, living for ourselves prevents us from living for God, and we cannot do the one without wholly giving up the other. If you value the kingdom of God more than all else, you will eagerly give up everything that prevents your having it, but no mere pretended esteem for it will prompt you to make the needful sacrifices, or will actually give you possession. A feigned desire does not move us to obtain anything. It is what you really love that you spend thought and effort upon, not what you know you should love, and are trying to persuade yourself to love. In the twin parables the Lord teaches that there must be a willingness to embrace the kingdom when it is found, and to hold it fast, at whatever costs and hazards, if we expect to possess it.

And is it any wonder, when heaven is our prize, and Christ our treasure, that we are sometimes called upon to give up much to obtain them? Is it any wonder that the apostles and early Christians were required to leave "houses, and brethren, and sisters, and lands," for Christ's sake? It is said of some, that they "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and enduring substance" (Hebrew 10:34). Paul surrendered all the things he had thought so highly of, saying, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Philippians 3:7).

Some have asked, "How can the kingdom of God be both a gift of heaven's grace and a purchase by man?" This question betrays a failure to appreciate the purpose of these parables. The index finger of both stories points to the exceeding worth of the kingdom. Its value is so far beyond all reckoning that at any cost of purchase it is still a gift. An opportunity is a gift as the very word implies, but it must be grasped, and Paul counsels us to buy it (Ephesians 5:16). The fertility of a field is a gift, but it must be purchased by man's labor. Thus salvation is both a gift and a purchase.

The climax in the twin parables is the eagerness with which each finder of treasure possessed his discovery. Each, when he made the discovery "went and sold all that he had." Each did it joyfully. Neither felt that he was making any sacrifices because the treasure he was possessing was worth so much more than what he had to offer for it that he did not hesitate.

Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like that. Once we see what it is worth to have God in our hearts, to have His spirit empower our lives, to follow His will, we realize that no matter what the cost, we want God above and beyond all things else. Sometimes we think of religion as taking all the joy out of life but, instead, it is like finding buried treasure, like finding a perfect jewel. When we really glimpse the glory of God, the price we pay becomes nothing.

And such has been the experience of men since the kingdom of Christ was established in the first century. A wise Christian writer, who lived many hundred years ago, in speaking of his own conversion, tells us how easy he found it, through his joy, to give up all those pleasures of sin, to which he had once clung so closely. "How sweet," he says, "did it at once become to me to be without the sweetness of those joys; and what I dreaded to be parted from, was now a joy to part with. Thou, who art sweeter than all pleasure, Thou did'st cast them forth, that instead thereof Thou mightest enter in Thyself."

Thank God, we hear of men giving up the dearest things they have, so as to make this one treasure their own. The thing parted with may be very different in one case to what it is in another. The ungodly man will have to part with his sin. The lover of money will have to give up his covetousness. The indolent man, his ease. The lover of pleasure, his evil companions. The learned man, his confidence in the

PARKING AND PETTING

wisdom of the world. The self-righteous man, his own goodness. Each must willingly sell what he has, that he may gain the treasure of heaven. There is no force needed, and no compulsion necessary. "For joy thereof he goeth and selleth all that he hath." "What are my sins," he asks, "or my gains, or my good name among men, or my fancied righteousness? These are all brittle reeds, which will break from under me. They are but filthy rags that will not cover me. I will cast them all away. Let them perish — that I may possess Christ, and be found in Him!"

Have you and I parted with all — yes, all that we are commanded to give up for Christ's sake — all that stands in the way between us and Him — all that interferes with our salvation. It is hard, I know, to do so. But we shall never win Christ, never possess Him, till we have done it. It is hard for flesh and blood. Our wicked, world-loving hearts grudge to part with what has been dear to us. But God can help us willingly strip ourselves of everything, that we may grasp so great a treasure, if we will surrender to Him.

You can possess the treasure of the kingdom now, but you must give up all for it. Again and again Augustine prayed, "Make me pure . . . but not now." Certain sins he was not ready to part with, but later, after he did possess Christ, he cried, "What I feared to be parted from was now a joy to surrender." And this can be your experience, too, if you will receive Christ by faith, repent of your sins, and be baptized into the Lord. When you take these steps of faith, the Lord will add you to the church, thus translating you into the kingdom of His dear Son (Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13). And there you will find the sweet repose for which your soul has longed, and from your lips will burst forth the song: "Lord, Thou has made us for Thee, and our heart is restless until it resteth in Thee."

PARKING AND PETTING

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Sermon No. 343

August 24, 1958

A few years ago a nationally known woman columnist said, "The question of petting is one of the most perplexing problems of teenagers, if one may judge from the mail I receive." And the editor of a widely read Catholic paper says that petting is one of the most disturbing problems confronting leaders of the Catholic Church today.

The practice of parking in an automobile and petting is widespread among our young people, but is it right? The woman columnist to whom we have referred says, "The questions most girls ask about petting are: 'Is it wrong?', 'Is it wise?', 'Is it modern?', 'Is it smart?' "

PARKING AND PETTING

and she says the answers are simple and emphatic: "It is wrong, it is not smart, it is not wise, it is not modern."

In 1938 the International Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association published a booklet by Edwin Clarke entitled: **Petting—Wise or Otherwise?** This is a very fine booklet, and it further points out the problem of petting.

Is it wise to pet when we know that in many instances it leads to impure thoughts? The Lord says, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). The way to a strong, decent life is the way of honest, truthful, decent thinking. Therefore, the Lord says, "Whatsoever things are pure . . . think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

The Bible says to "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). It is "out of the heart" that the cheap, vulgar, dirty, unworthy things proceed, and any act which will incite lust is evil. If we may be guilty of lusting after a person of the opposite sex simply by looking at that person, what must be the intensity of the lust developed by petting! (See Matthew 5:28,29).

Is it wise, or right, to park and pet when we know it may lead to sexual intimacy? Doctors will confirm the fact that absolutely nothing is more capable of arousing passion in a young man to the point where he may desire the completion of the marriage act, than petting. The reason is simple — petting is the beginning of the marriage act. It is not something that is meant to be started, and toyed with, and frustrated, and left hanging in mid-air. It is like lighting a firecracker and foolishly holding it in one's hand, expecting it not to explode.

"But I know when to stop," someone may say. And right there is one of the dangers of petting. One may know when to stop and not stop, for too frequently he has aroused his emotions to such a pitch that he is unable to stop. Medical doctors will confirm the fact that as passion may increase in a young man, he may finally reach a point of no return, when it becomes physically impossible for him to control himself any longer. When he reaches this stage, there is nothing a boy will not do to satisfy himself — cost him or the girl what it may. And it usually costs the girl.

Not long ago, in a small town in the East, a fifteen year old boy — an altar boy — was in jail trying to commit suicide. He had been arrested for murdering a young teenage girl, after assaulting her. You might say, "What a horrible beast!" But fifteen year old boys usually are not beasts. Who knows what it was that aroused this boy to the degree of passion where he desired the marriage act; then, reaching the point of no return, probably tried to satisfy himself? When the girl resisted, the boy — either in fear or shame — killed her, and then satisfied himself. Now in jail, he was humiliated and

PARKING AND PETTING

ashamed of himself, and tried to do away with his life — all for one bit of momentary pleasure.

God, for the procreation of the human race, has given to women the greater physical beauty and attraction. He has given to men a greater appetite or desire for matters of sex. There is nothing sinful or evil about this. It is only the misuse out of marriage that makes it evil.

If girls could only understand the fact that, although they may not be easily aroused by petting, the boy can be driven to the point of no return after just a few minutes of this, then girls would be more careful in granting such liberties.

Boys sometimes try to justify petting by saying that it is necessary in order for them to find out if a girl would make a suitable wife. But doctors say this is basically false. They say, "There is only this grain of truth in the idea. A girl or a boy who has a fixed belief that sex is vile and sex relations in marriage are shameful is not a good prospect for matrimony . . . But because a girl does not care to pet with an acquaintance or even a friend, does not follow that she would not be a most loving and responsive wife. The fact that a girl does not pet throws absolutely no light on her desirability as a marriage partner."

The people who choose one another as a result of a petting party, put marriage almost altogether upon a physical plane, and this is not a suitable basis for a lasting marriage. The physical aspect of marriage is an important part of life, and it is nothing of which to be ashamed, but it can be decidedly overemphasized. If the union is no stronger than the physical tie, it will likely be dissolved in the divorce courts.

Girls sometimes try to justify petting on the grounds that they must engage in it to be popular. But young ladies should remember that a thing which is easy to obtain often has much less value than that which is hard to get. Boys are usually not permanently interested in the girl who is readily accessible, who will stand for "heavy petting," as the expression goes. They may play with her for a while, not for her own sake, but for the sake of the petting which she allows. Then they will throw her away. On the other hand, the girl who is an interesting conversationalist and a good listener, or just a good pal does not have to use her sex capital to attract attention. She does not need to sell herself for a dinner, or an automobile ride. The finest men are not even temporarily interested in the girl who is very free and easy. She is not the kind they want to have as a friend or a wife. So if a girl diminishes her attractiveness to really fine men, she pays an exceedingly high price for a few dates, and a little popularity. When a girl of fine qualities realizes this, she will hardly be inclined to allow petting, just because some fellow who cares nothing for her insists that such is the way of the world.

PARKING AND PETTING

Many a boy will go with a girl to see how much he can get from her. If she is foolish enough to give in to him, he may continue dating her for a while; but usually after he has taken her for a ride, and satisfied himself with her over a period of time, he will then cast her aside for someone else. Particularly is this true when it comes to marriage, for a man usually tries to find someone more pure and holy to be the mother of his children, and his companion for life. It may not seem quite fair, but many men are like that, and a girl is foolish if she does not face the fact.

There are many, many examples to prove a boy will respect a girl who has respect for herself, and the courage to show it. In one of our Eastern cities a young soldier came home on furlough. He had quite a gay time in the Army, and he thought he would continue the same at home. He went out with a fine girl — the first time he had dated her. On this first date he treated her with great respect. But by the time of the second date his furlough was almost over, and he figured he had better not waste any more time. So he started to make a "pass" at the girl, but she slapped him in the face. The soldier was stunned. But later he wrote, "At first I was angry, but after thinking it over, I said to myself, 'Here is a girl who is different, a girl who has moral courage and respect for herself. This is the girl for me.' This is the girl he married. She is the mother of his children today.

Although most boys may not admit it, usually the girls they secretly admire and would rather be out with, and would prefer to marry, are the ones they "can't get to first base with." They respect such girls because the girls respect themselves.

Petting is justified by some on the grounds that "it is natural to want to pet, and to have sex relations." Of course it is "natural," but that fact proves nothing at all. Civilization consists largely in getting away from the "natural," and in doing such unnatural things as cooking food, living in houses, and going to school. It is more or less "natural" for us to hit back when our tempers flare, but such action is no compliment to us, and it is not a mark of progress. Progress consists in our rising above the "natural," and doing what a higher and holier law dictates.

Undoubtedly, many of you boys and girls who are listening will think that the views we have expressed are very strict and prudish, but to you we say, "Wait until the day you get married, and your first child is born. When you see the responsibility God has placed in your hands in the rearing of that child — and others that may follow — you will be amazed how oldfashioned you can become in a hurry."

Many young parents have admitted that their children will never get away with the things they have. Only when you have children and teenagers of your own, will many of you begin to understand why your parents worry so, and try to protect you and restrict you in certain things they feel may be harmful.

As an outstanding writer says, "Perhaps a few (of your) companions may consider virtue, chastity, and modesty old-fashioned, but you will find these same friends scattered like stardust if you call on them in time of trouble. Rely upon the precepts of your family and religion. They are not intended to interfere with your fun. In fact they safeguard the happiness of your future. Society is geared to expect most young persons to enter a happy, fruitful, and constructive marriage. If the physical relationship that will make this hope a reality is dissipated by indiscriminate petting in the teens, the future stretches ahead as a dismal, rather than rosy, path. So pay no heed to the sophist who calls you old-fashioned; be proud of the distinction" (Quoted in **Weekly Bulletin** of the Fifteenth Street Church of Christ, 2748 East 15th Street, Tulsa, Okla., June 29, 1958).

But is it old-fashioned to stand for purity? The age-old practice has been for men to be more or less promiscuous. It is essentially a new-fashioned thing for most men to remain pure before marriage, and to be loyal to one wife in marriage. So the plea for purity is new-fashioned and not old-fashioned at all!

We would in no way attempt to excuse or whitewash the misconduct of boys on dates, for they have a responsibility to God to practice self-control. But girls surely have a grave responsibility for preserving their purity and for protecting their morals. If they become immodest and let down their moral safeguards, generations to come will suffer the consequences.

You young ladies may ask, "What can we do to solve this problem of petting?" and in answer we offer several suggestions. In the first place, we suggest that you compliment the boy who treats you with respect. This will put them on their honor, and indicate that you expect continued respect in the future. A girl should appreciate the fact that the boy who does not try to lay hands on her every time they go out, usually is interested in her for her own sake — not merely for his own pleasure's sake. Ordinarily such a boy will make a good husband, for if he respects a girl out of marriage, he probably will do the same in marriage. This is why so many of our young girls are foolish when they believe they must show their affections for boys by indulging in heavy necking and passionate kissing just because the boy expects it, or for fear of being unpopular.

In the second place, we suggest that you do most of your dating in a good clean crowd, and that you not go on single dates until you can be sure that your friend is trustworthy.

Our third suggestion is that you refrain from "going steady" while you are very young. We often see high school girls wearing around their necks a chain, from which hangs the ring of the boy with whom they are going steady. This is a sign which means that the girl "belongs" to a certain boy — for all practical purposes, she is a "slave" to him. Actually, if the girl were honest with herself, she would wear

the ring in her nose instead of on the chain, for, though she may not admit it, she is likely being lead a "dog's life" by the boy.

Why would a girl allow herself to be "reserved" by one boy alone, and why would a boy want to reserve a girl for himself alone, except in marriage? And yet, how many of these very young people going steady have any serious intention of marriage? Going steady should be a period of preparation for marriage, and young people in their early teens are not ready for this serious step.

Most girls start going steady because they think it's cute, and because everybody else does it. They do not stop to consider the grave moral dangers involved in their action. It is difficult for a young boy and girl, in this day and age, with all the temptations and occasions of sin that surround them, to go steady, and still be pure in heart and life. Not long ago a couple of high school young people came into our office for counsel, and in the course of our conversation they confessed that they were giving up the practice of going steady because of the moral risks. They said their attraction for one another had become such that they must cease to go steady or be immoral. They chose to remain pure.

But many girls today — as a result of going steady — will let down their moral barriers and sacrifice the priceless virtue of virginity merely for the sake of being popular. The editor of a religious magazine says that "mounting evidence proves that early dating, and particularly going steady, are taking more young away from God than almost anything else." Much of the blame for early dating lies with parents — especially dating mothers. In all too many cases they are more concerned about the social well-being of their children than they are about the spiritual. Many of them seem to be afraid that if their daughters reach sixteen with no prospects of marriage, they will be old maids. So, they begin to arrange social activities for them at very early ages. One author says, "In many cases, they even try to pressure some of the school principals in our grade schools to conduct dancing parties for children in the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades." This same author says, "What a tragic mistake to force this type of activity on our young boys and girls at an age when they should still be playing ball or skipping rope."

But our fourth suggestion is, that you refrain from drinking when dating, or any other time as for that matter. There are few things more capable of breaking down the will to resist than alcohol. Usually, in stories, movies and plays where there is portrayed an attempt to lead a young girl astray, there is an effort made to get her to drink first. If you should be out with a boy who tries to get you to drink, you should say No so emphatically that his conscience will be blistered thereby.

Our fifth suggestion is, that you dress modestly. The Lord has decreed that "women adorn themselves in modest apparel," and a

violation of His will brings heartache sooner or later. The Lord has forbidden lust, and He does not excuse men when they are guilty of lusting, but will He not likewise indict women who dress in a way to incite lewdness? Who knows how many young women have suffered the consequences of dressing too scantily? How many boys have been emboldened to make passes at young girls after being inflamed by the indecent dress worn by the fairer sex? A girl or a woman who dresses immodestly is inviting trouble and exposing herself to disaster.

But young men, may we make a few suggestions to you which we believe will help you to refrain from petting. Remember that when you start a young girl to petting, you are gambling for your own pleasure with the happiness of another person. It may mean her complete moral downfall, and the happiness of a home that may have been.

When I think of petting I think of an impulsive person who simply must pick a beautiful flower when he sees it, even though the act quickly takes the life of the flower and prevents others from enjoying its beauty. We all know how some persons will thoughtlessly pluck a blossom, only to throw it away within a few minutes, and let it die. This is a picture of what men do when they play with a beautiful young girl, and then discard her. Aside from being a violation of God's will, and therefore a sin, such conduct is unbecoming of anyone who calls himself a man.

Young men, if you would keep yourselves above reproach, refrain from reading suggestive books and magazines. Do not gaze upon lewd and lurid pictures that fill many of the periodicals on our newsstands. Stay away from movies that excite the baser nature of your being, and refuse to park your car in secluded places with people of moral instability.

If you have a problem in connection with petting, talk to some sympathetic and understanding person. One's family doctor, or a teacher, or your minister may be the person who can help you. A few minutes with an informed and sympathetic friend often clears up difficulties which have bothered a person for years.

If you would be pure, keep your speech clean. Few things degrade people more quickly or injure their influence more permanently than dirty speech. Isaiah said that he lived among a people of "unclean lips." So do we. Dirty language hurts the man who uses it and the man who hears it. Some of it is just plain, cheap and vulgar. Some of it is disgustingly filthy. No wonder a godly man of long ago said, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalms 141:3).

Our last admonition is that you become a Christian. And this you can do through faith in Christ, repentance from sin, and baptism into the Lord Jesus. The New Testament is explicit on this point, and

there is no mistaking the divine plan of salvation. Without complying with these divine terms, no man of our day shall see God.

After becoming a Christian, it is necessary to be one daily. To Timothy, a young man, the apostle Paul said, "Keep thyself pure" (I Timothy 5:22). To other young men, the apostle John penned these lines: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (I John 2:14). It should be evident from these Scriptures, and from examples of Christian living we see in our day, that young men — and women — can live lives of purity. It is to this noble task that we ask you to dedicate your hearts and lives today.

IS DANCING CHRISTIAN RECREATION?

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

August 31, 1958

Sermon No. 344

Dancing is one of the most popular pastimes of our day, and to refuse to dance is to exclude one's self from many social circles. And yet, since its origin, devout men and women have opposed dancing as Christian recreation. Surely there must be some good reason why so many devout people, even of widely differing faiths, have come to this conclusion. It is our purpose in this sermon to study some of those reasons.

Dancing is opposed on the grounds that it is questionable. Even those who engage in it have conscientious qualms about it, and frequently they ask preachers, "Is there any harm in it?" Why do they ask questions if dancing is pure and wholesome? They do not ask if there is any harm in feeding the poor, or in caring for the sick, or in rendering deeds of service to others.

Many worldly people, even many who dance, see the evils of it and confess that it is wrong. And most of the others who dance have doubt in their minds about it being right. But the Lord forbids our doing anything about which there is a doubt, and He says we stand condemned if we go ahead and do what is doubtful (Romans 14:23). Surely we must all admit that a common sense rule to follow in business, social life, or religion, is to stay always on safe ground. If so, we must refrain from dancing for it is questionable even to many who engage in it.

Dancing is also opposed by devout men on the grounds that it breaks down the barriers of modesty. It encourages an unwholesome familiarity between the sexes which may lead to intimacies and petting after the dance. An outstanding educator stresses this point in an

article in defense of modern dance. She writes: "Dancing is an exciting and pleasurable recreation as it affords a partial satisfaction to the sex impulse."

Mothers used to teach their girls to demand of the boys a "hands off" policy, and what a blessing if all mothers would teach both their girls and boys this principle today! But if they did, the liberties of the dance would nullify their teaching.

Kind father and mother, if only one girl or boy each year is led into a life of impurity because of the dance, if it were your boy or girl would it be worth the price? Society is certainly running low when it puts popularity ahead of purity, and a good time ahead of good morals.

Dancing is further opposed for the reason that it destroys spirituality. In the twenty-first chapter of Job we read of a group of people who took the timbrel and the harp and rejoiced at the sound of the organ as they danced with their children for pleasure, amusement, and hilarity. These people, therefore, said unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" (Job 21:11,14,15). The Lord says that those who dance, and engage in the other activities mentioned in this chapter, do not desire a knowledge of His ways. It may be that you feel that dancing promotes spirituality, but our Maker says it hinders it. He should know for He made us, and the Bible says that Christ "needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man" (John 2:25). It matters not how wise men may be, nor who recommends it and who thinks it is good, God says dancing is a detriment to spirituality.

We know from personal observation that dancing destroys the spirituality of Christians. We have seen young people who were daily Bible readers, who prayed regularly, and who were actively engaged in the work of the church become totally disinterested when they began to dance. They no longer looked upon the church as a place where they could receive a spiritual uplift. They came to prefer the dance hall and the places of amusements to the house of the Lord. If a service at church conflicted with a dance they would choose the dance instead. They could attend the dance and stay until the early hours of the morning, but it became a burden to attend prayer meeting on Wednesday night and two services on the Lord's day.

Christ is not welcome in the atmosphere of the dance hall, and he who daily reads portions of the Sermon on the Mount will turn from this activity, and refuse to have anything to with it. We challenge you to read daily this great sermon. If you do, we believe you will not continue to dance.

Going from the dance hall into the house of worship is like going from total darkness into the light of the noonday sun. There is this much difference between the two places. From the dance hall on Saturday night to the house of God on Sunday morning is too far for the Christian to travel, and ere long he ceases to make the trip, if he continues to dance.

The modern dance is an appeal to the physical; it has no appeal to the soul. It is strictly of the flesh; for the gratification of the flesh, and it is on a plane to which the soul should never stoop. Man was made for higher things, and the Christian should have higher ideals. Why live in the valley when we can live on the mountain top? Why eat out of the garbage can when there is wholesome food on the dining table? Why walk in the mire when we can walk on the pavement?

Dancing has never been looked upon as a spiritual activity. If you were to see an elder of the church upon the dance floor, what would your attitude be? Would you say that he must be a faithful Christian in whom I should have the utmost confidence because I saw him dancing? Certainly not! Why? "Because," you would reply, "I saw him doing a thing that no elder of the church should do." That would be your attitude and even dancing church members know that that would be their attitude, too.

If dancing is Christian recreation, it should be all right for the preacher, but do you really think it is all right for him? Do you? Do you think the preacher would be respected and trusted as a faithful Christian if he danced? If you had a dancing preacher and a group of dancing elders, would you call upon them for comfort and consolation when trials and tribulations come upon you? You would not have any confidence in them, would you?

There is not a dancing member of the Lord's church in all the land who would want to see the preacher and elders dancing. Why? They know it would be a reflection upon the church of Christ and the religion of our Lord. But if dancing is productive of good, and if it promotes spirituality, let us begin each dance with prayer, and turn all our church buildings into dance halls! Who would advocate this?

Christ said one can tell a tree by its fruit, and when we see dancing church members lose interest in the Sunday night services, and Sunday morning Bible classes we conclude that the tree which produces this fruit is corrupt. We are forced to the conclusion that only indifferent church members dance; or else that dancing makes one an indifferent church member.

Devout men of various faiths have spoken out against the modern dance. A Jewish rabbi writes, "Modern dancing is popular, not because of its grace, but because of its appeal of our lower nature." A

Methodist bishop writes, I deem the modern dance an unmitigated evil, because in most of its forms it is vulgar and wars directly against the claims of the spiritual life." A Presbyterian preacher says, "Dancing . . . leads to forgetfulness of God."

Dancing is opposed further because of its lascivious nature. Why have so many, including many members of the church, been swept up by the surge of enthusiasm for what has been called the "dance craze"? Wherein lies the secret of its appeal? Some respond, "It provides a pleasant way of exercising." And others add, "It helps one develop grace and poise." If these are valid reasons, the question immediately arises, "Why then do not boys dance with boys, girls with girls, women with women, and men with men? To ask this question is to strike at the very heart of dancing, for the appeal of the modern dance has its foundation in human passion. As we have already pointed out, dancing is defended on the grounds that it is "a partial satisfaction to the sex impulse."

Now to be sure not everyone who participates in the dance is aware of the basic reason why he enjoys doing so. But herein lies much of the danger. Even though one may not be aware of this basic appeal when he begins to dance, by the time he engages in it long enough to recognize its appeal, he is often so captivated by it that he will not consider giving it up.

A college president says, "The dance has contributed many disgraced girls to this world. Many boys have lost their honor and character in a dance hall. Girls lose virtue and purity in dance halls, but never one has been made purer. Everything about a dance, no matter where, is conducive to immorality. Those who remain moral do so in spite of the dance, not because of it."

A doctor says, "The modern dance is the fine art of covering with music indelicate, immodest, and oftentimes indecent attitudes and postures between men and women. It is too bad for reformation. Its only remedy is extermination."

Another doctor says, "I attack the modern dance as a reversion toward savagery. As a medical man, I flatly charge that modern social dancing is fundamentally sinful and evil. I charge that dancing's charm is based upon sex appeal. I charge that it is the most insidious of the maneuvers preliminary to sex betrayal . . . I am no prig or prude, and so I tell you frankly, it is not safe to subject even the strongest men and women to the subtle temptations of the dance. A trail of broken homes proves this."

The matron of a home for fallen girls says, "Seven tenths of the girls received here have fallen through dancing and its influence." The head of a home for fallen girls in a European city says that eighty per cent of the girls received traced their downfall to the dance.

An ex-dancing teacher says, "I will say that I do not believe a woman can waltz virtuously and waltz well, for she must yield her person completely to her partner." Another former dance master says, "I have found the ballroom an avenue of destruction to multitudes. This is a truth burned into the hearts of thousands of downcast fathers and heartbroken mothers."

An owner and operator of one of the largest night clubs in America says, "There is left but one reason for the popularity of the dance, and that is sex appeal. I hasten to assure you I do not believe the dancers are always conscious that this is the reason they enjoy this position and the steps that go with it. But this lack of consciousness is merely an added factor of danger."

A prominent teacher, preacher, and writer says, "It is estimated that nearly sixty thousand girls enter the underworld every year. Sixty thousand in a year, and at least three-fourths of them as a result of the dance."

A good friend of mine, who has been an Army Chaplain for many years, said, "Before my experience as an Army Chaplain, I had no basic objection to dancing. However, my opinion has changed. It is now my opinion that the dance is a vehicle of unhappiness and ruin. As a Chaplain, I was counsellor to thousands of men and their families. It was noted that in the majority of cases that came to me, involving infidelity . . . 'dancing' was either directly or indirectly responsible for the condition of those with whom I counselled" (Benjamin I. Lowe, in personal letter to author).

The atmosphere of the dance, its provision for close physical contact between opposite sexes, the soft lights, and sensual music are all calculated to stimulate unlawful thoughts and purposes. The practice of "petting" has been brought into the dance hall, set to music, and graced by another name. The same dangers are still present, however. Emotions which God decreed should be aroused only in the marriage relationship are kindled, and the result is a cheapening and a coarsening of character if not a tragic ruining of life.

Although the word "dance," in the sense that we use it today, does not appear in the New Testament, the idea which it represents is mentioned and condemned. In the Galatian letter, the apostle Paul wrote, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19,20). There are two words in this scripture which embrace dancing as a part of their meaning. They are "lasciviousness," and "revellings."

Webster's New International Dictionary says that lascivious means "wanton, lewd, lustful; tending to produce voluptuous or lewd emo-

tions." The New World Dictionary defines lascivious as "lustful; wanton; exciting lust." And Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, in defining lasciviousness, says, "Wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc."

In defining the word "revel," the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary says that it is "riotous or noisy merry-making; an occasion or course of merry-making or noisy festivity, with dancing . . . or other forms of lively entertainment." The Century Dictionary, in defining performances often given in connection with masques and pageants; a dancing procession or entertainment . . . The revels were dances of a more free and general nature . . . In these many of the nobility of both sexes took part." Revel as a verb is defined in this dictionary as "To dance; move with a light and dancing step."

These Scriptures should settle the matter once for all. In these passages the Lord uses words that include dancing as a part of their meaning, and if we respect His word we must refrain from this activity.

Dancing is opposed by Christians because of the company it keeps. The kindest thing that can be said about any dance is that it is in bad company. We believe that investigation will show drinking, gambling, and prostitution are sisters of the dance. Show me a roadhouse that does not have all these things! There may be a few exceptions, but they are few indeed.

One young lady wrote, "I never visited the dance halls or roadhouses, with one exception and that to my regret. I always felt that a Christian was out of place at such places, that it would be taking a great big chance to indulge. So many girls I knew did indulge, and close friends, too. Never yet have I known one to be strong in the church that allowed himself or herself to practice 'taking in' such places. I have heard it said, 'Never do anything you can't thank God for,' and surely no Christian can thank God for an evening at a night club."

Originating in the houses of ill fame in New Orleans a few decades ago, modern ballroom dancing has swept through the country like a wildfire — for one reason only. That reason is the same that originated the modern dance. You can take the dance out of the bawdy house, but you can not take the nature out of the dance. It is still lasciviousness set to music whether you find it in the road house or in the parlor.

Supervising the dance will not control the mind of the dancers. The close embrace of the sexes will arouse unholy thoughts. All the police and school teachers of the town can not keep dancing from being lascivious. Neither can the surroundings make it right. Whether

in the parlor, or in the school gymnasium, dancing is lascivious regardless of where it is done.

But some may ask if it is not possible to clean up the dance and place it under responsible supervision and thus make it better. Yes, it is possible to improve on the roadhouses, taverns, and commercial dance halls, where dancing is accompanied by drinking, gambling, profanity, and often by organized vice. But in the home under good supervision it still retains the objectionable feature of encouraging unwholesome familiarity between the sexes and the breaking down of modesty. And what assurance does the Christian parent have that once he has encouraged the dance in the modern manner that they will seek the same amusement in the roadhouse? Supervisors of college and high school dances report that one of their main problems is what happens after the students leave the supervised dance to stop at roadhouses, and night clubs.

We are told that some of the churches have dances in their very buildings. Yes, we know, but we are ashamed of them. When the church fears to draw the line, men lose respect for her. When she stands for strict discipline, holds aloft the purity of the stainless Christ, refuses to stand for any compromise, demands a complete surrender of life to His service—then, and not till then, will men and women take notice of her claims, sacrifice for her, and die in her service.

The Christian is one who has heard and believed the good news of Christ's sacrifice for the sins of the world. His faith in the Son of God has led him to turn from every sin and to confess his faith in Christ before men. He has been buried with Christ in baptism, and he has risen from that water grave to a new life.

The Christian has answered the highest call in the world, the call of the Master to consecrated service. He is a saint, a disciple of the perfect Man, the Son of God. He is to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world. He is to "abstain from the very appearance of evil," and "not to eat flesh or drink wine, nor do anything" that would cause his brother to stumble.

There is so much work to be done for Christ. God can do wonders with us if we will only surrender completely to Him. May God fill our lives so full with His love that we shall crowd out all fleshly desires and become more like Jesus every day. Let us find our joy in work and worship for Him.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

JULY, 1958

Receipts	\$18,823.43
Expenditures	\$18,242.69
Receipts Exceed Expenditures by	\$ 580.74

This abbreviated financial statement is being made in order to have the report printed without delay. Any information other than these figures will be given gladly upon request and up-to-date statements will be printed at regular intervals.

TELEVISION

Now that vacations are over, plans are going forward for making films to be used on Herald of Truth. More stations are accepting the series. As of today 32 stations having a potential audience of 22 million are showing the series every week.

Latest television station to run the program on a sustaining basis is KPRC-TV in Houston, Texas. This powerful station will cover a substantial section of Southeast Texas. The time will be announced as soon as it is received.

RADIO

Station KGNC in Amarillo will again carry the radio program beginning September 7. This station will cover portions of New Mexico, Colorado, Oklahoma and Texas.

OUR APPEAL

Please pray for us that the Gospel may continue to be preached over more and more radio and television stations and that the financial needs may be met. Every effort is being made and will continue to be put forth in answering requests for the program over local stations.

LABORERS TOGETHER

HARDING CHURCH OF CHRIST

R. D. No. 1

Pittston, Pennsylvania

Herald of Truth
Abilene, Texas

Dear Brethren:

In times past I have not concerned myself to giving very much thought to the Herald of Truth, either pro or con. I have never said much for it but then I have never said much against it. Given time a thing will usually prove itself, one way or another. Just the other day the value of the Herald of Truth was proved to me.

Mrs. Harry Hubler, who lives in a small town about twenty miles from here, wrote to Brother Harper telling him that she desired to be immersed after hearing him speak on the radio concerning baptism. She had been sprinkled when a child about 77 years ago and was admitted to the Presbyterian denomination. This letter was forwarded to me in July and after visiting her a couple of times she attended our services and was baptized during our meeting this last August. She did this in spite of the fact that the church is pitifully weak and largely unknown in this Catholic dominated part of the country. She was afraid of water and has very high blood pressure so there was also fear for her physical well-being by herself as well as by her family. But none of this stopped her and she arose from the waters of baptism with that same worn frail body but she had a different spiritual concept. She was a 77 year old babe in Christ. At the rate we are spreading the gospel in the East it would have taken at least 40 years to have reached this lady personally without the medium provided by the Herald of Truth. That means she would have had to have lived to the ripe old age of 117 before she could have heard those words that Brother Harper preached to her. And by our method of sending inexperienced men to such fields as this she would had to have listened to someone far less convincing than Brother Harper when she finally did get to hear it. This does provide food for thought doesn't it?

You may use this information in any way that you wish, in part or in its entirety or reword it if you desire.

In Christian love,
JACK COLEMAN

HIGHLAND CHURCH OF CHRIST

RADIO PROGRAM

Fifth and Highland

P. O. Box 1858

ABILENE, TEXAS



POSTMASTER:
FORM 3547 REQUESTED

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