

# The University Heights Messenger

June 13, 2010

## **“Overmuch Righteous”**

**By Robert Turner**

“Have you noticed how many “really strict families seem to have problems with their children in later years?” This comment is common, and for some time I dismissed it by saying that such “exceptions” were more noticeable than the *usual* problems in families of “loose” upbringing.

But the observations continue. “We notice that some of the preachers who shout the loudest about immodesty get into moral problems themselves.” Or, “What about the ultra-conservatives who become ultra-liberal?” Again, I think there is a tendency to generalize, to allow a few bad notes to spoil the symphony. Also, some may use such cases as their excuse for disregard of decency and truth.

*But what about the real cases?* How may we explain those seemingly wide swings of the pendulum from devoted husband to philanderer, from “perfect” child to delinquent, from God-fearing-preacher to man-pleaser? Notice I said “seemingly” wide or abrupt swing. I do not believe such changes take place overnight, we only see the manifestation of the change that has been taking place for some time. **“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”** (Matthew 12:34) **“They went out from us, but they were not of us;”**--i.e., at the time of the physical separation (1 John 2:19).

Perhaps the most classic example in the New Testament is the “elder” son of Luke 15:25-f. This seemingly model son became angry, stubborn, disrespectful, and showed a self-righteous spirit. All of this when he *should* have been rejoicing at his brother’s return. It is difficult to believe that

this was a sudden, unpredictable change in the young man’s character.

Solomon said, **“Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself over-wise, why shouldst thou destroy thyself?”** (Ecclesiastes 7:15-18). Adam Clark comments, *“It cannot be supposed, except by those who are totally unacquainted with the nature of true religion, that a man may have too much holiness, too much of the life of God in his soul!”* Yet, in our pride, we may become *“presumptuously self-sufficient, as if acquainted with the whole of Divine truth* (J.F.& B.). Such fanatical, pharisaical “righteousness” may give the appearance of strict dedication to Godliness, when in reality it is but a dedication to a sectarian form of religion.

The child who learns that certain things are expected of him (words and conduct), may wear a shell of obedience externally. However, seething rebellion may lurk deep within him, and sometimes it’s not lurking *that* deep at all. The day may come when he throws aside his external cloak and we think he has made some sudden change.

The preacher may wish to be “sound in the faith” but through environment and schooling equate this with some sectarian “orthodoxy.” Certain “firm stands” are *expected* of him, and he produces. But if inner conviction is lacking he becomes a miserable caricature of a preacher, or someday breaks the shell to go God only knows where.

I believe Solomon is telling us to avoid this sort of “overmuch righteousness.” (“Overmuch wickedness” of the same passage is antithetically worded and does not imply that *a little* wickedness is acceptable).

And Solomon gives the solution. In the last verse of our text (Eccl. 7:18) he says, “**For he that feareth God shall come forth from them all.**” We must live as servants of God, SUBECT TO HIM ALONE, and followers of men only to the extent they follow God (Note Paul’s exhortation, 1 Cor. 11:1).

We must not discourage the teaching of children. Certain conduct is rightly expectd of them by responsible parents. But successful teaching, to lead to a truly Christian life, must be teaching that makes them aware of their responsibility to God. We must learn to be honest with ourselves, knowing that no amount of sham will fool the heavenly Father.

Orthodoxy is not a dirty word, if God and His word are the “rule” for that faith. All Christians, including preachers, should learn what is expected of them by the Lord, and should hold to that tenaciously. There is no danger of our “cracking up” from *too close* adherence to this. But “foolish and unlearned questions”, “profane and vain babblings”, “eat as doth a canker” (2 Tim. 2:14-f.) and will destroy us.

Those who become adept at striving about “words to no profit” are lifted with pride. They build an artificial shell about themselves that keeps them out of touch with reality.

Balance is not compromise--it is honesty with God, man, and self.

### IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

**Esmeralda Agustin** continues struggling spiritually.

**Glenn Kimberlin** remains house bound.

**Glen Davis** is continuing his testing after suffering another seizure.

**Ruel Baker** is struggling with extreme shortness of breath and fatigue. It is caused by the advancement of his heart disease.

**Robert Brundige**, Richard’s brother, is in Parkside Manor in Cynthiana dealing with some issues. **Sarah** Brundige, Richard’s mother, is in Cambridge Place Nursing Home and in need of our prayer.

**Reid Braswell** has been given days to live. The family had been called on to get to Atlanta as quickly as they could. At the time of this writing I have not received news of his passing. Let’s continue to keep he and his family in our prayers.

Please remember the **Miller family** as they mourn the passing of a loved one in Jackie’s great aunt.

Let’s also remember **David Day and his wife, Michelle Oxendine, Gail Stein, Shannon Gilbert, Ron Catchen, Chuck McDavitt, and David Blakeman.**

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

Our Summer Series is just around the corner (21-25). Have you made your plans to attend? Also, let’s make sure to take some invitations to pass out to folks in our neighborhoods.

The men’s meeting is today at 3:30.

### BIBLE READING SCHEDULE FOR 6/13-6/19:

**Sunday:**1 Sam 15-16, Ps 119:41-48, 2 Cor 7-8

**Monday:**1 Sam 17, Ps 119:49-56, 2 Cor 9-10

**Tuesday:**1 Sam 18-19, Ps 119:57-64, 2 Cor 11-13

**Wednesday:**1 Sam 20-21, Ps 119:65-72, Gal 1-2

**Thursday:**1 Sam 22-23, Ps 119:73-80, Gal 3-4

**Friday:**1 Sam 24-25, Ps 119:81-88, Gal 5-6

**Saturday:**1 Sam 26-28, Ps 119:89-96, Eph 1

### SERMON TOPICS:

Sunday AM. Speak Plainly!

Sunday PM. Premillennialism 2 (The throne of David)

### CLASS INFORMATION:

Lesson 21