

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.

# THE LENEXA EDIFIER

John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

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## INFLUENCES: BAD AND WORSE

Jim Stauffer

We have all experienced the heightened concern over the influence ISIS seems to exert over impressionable people all over the globe. Maybe it is the apocalyptic message, maybe it is nothing more than the extra attention they receive from those people, but something is striking a chord and most people are concerned and rightly so. Our lives and those of loved ones are important to us as they should be.

I am wondering, however, how concerned some of us are about influences to our spiritual lives. If avoiding the message of ISIS is important for people to escape its influence, how important is it for us to avoid the message of the world to limit its influence over our spiritual lives.

For instance, Paul says in **1 Cor. 15:19**, *If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable*. He says this while teaching the fact of the resurrection in the last day that will allow our bodies to go from mortality to immortality in order to live eternally in the presence of God. He says that is the prize we are after (**2 Tim. 4:8**) and not anything this life can offer. Later on in that same chapter, he tells us, *Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals*. Paul is concerned about influences that may alter our perspective of the value of being in Christ and cause us to think of earthly life more highly than eternal life.

Isn't that, after all, the difference between the devout Christian and those who claim to love Christ but try not to let their faith dominate their lives. It reminds me of the old joke where one fellow says to the other, "Well, I am a Christian, but I don't let it make a fool of me." His friend then replies, "What did?" Paul told the Romans it was a fool who failed to honor God above all else in his life. **Rom. 1:20** *For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: 21 because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of*

*corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things*. The idolatry Paul condemns here has become full grown. But make no mistake, it started by falling in love with life on earth. Taking too much pleasure in what we can see, touch, taste, smell and hear is a great temptation and can completely distract us from things eternal. That, Paul says, is when we become fools and *most pitiable*.

John discusses the temptations of our fleshly world this way, **1 John 2:15** *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* 1) We must choose between loving the world and God. 2) There are three major areas in which the world tries to exert its influence; lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life. 3) These are of the world and not of the Father. 4) These all pass away with the world. 5) But doing God's will enables us to abide forever.

Folks, we live in a world where everything about us is temporary including our lives. Jesus made this point in **Matt. 10:28** *And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*. When Peter tells us of both the definite but uncertain time of Jesus' coming: definite because without fail He will come to judge us all (**Acts 17:31**), and uncertain because he will come as a thief in the night, when least expected, he goes on to tell us what will happen to this world. **2 Pet. 3:11** *Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, 12 looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

We can see clearly the influence we should be most concerned about controlling is that which can affect our eternal lives.

## Things Expected of All Members

One of the great blessings that God has for His children is the fellowship they can enjoy as members of a local congregation. We believe that this involvement in a local church is an important part of God's plan for our spiritual well being. In this special, spiritual family there are things that are expected of all the members. Here are some of the things that will help us bring glory and praise to God as we work together:

- 1) Each of us must realize that the example we set in the local community has a great potential for good or evil. As a member of this local church it is expected that you will live a pure moral life -- one that others will be able to observe and imitate (**Matthew 5:16**). The world accepts and even encourages immoral activities, but as Christians we are not to be *"of this world"* (**1 John 2:15-17**).
- 2) We believe that it is the responsibility of each member to seek opportunities to serve their brothers and sisters. Too many view the church from a selfish perspective and seem interested only in what might be done for them. Instead, we understand that greatness in the Lord's kingdom comes from providing humble service (**Matthew 23:11,12**). We are to *"rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep"* (**Romans 12:15**). There will be many occasions to share in one another's joys, and with tenderness and sympathy to bear one another's burdens. As a member of this local body we need your help in these important ways.
- 3) Unfortunately, there will be times when a brother or sister may slip back and begin to engage in sinful activities. You are expected to exercise a care and watchfulness for your brethren in these matters (**Hebrews 3:13**). There are times when we need to faithfully warn, rebuke and admonish a fellow member (**2 Timothy 4:2, Galatians 6:1**). This may even lead to the unpleasant task of withdrawing from an unruly Christian (**2 Thess. 3:14**). Your full cooperation and support is expected if, and when, such becomes necessary. We are blessed by God's plan for us to be members of a local congregation. But, this blessing comes with associated responsibilities. We previously discussed the importance of 1) setting a proper example in the local community, 2) assisting and serving our brothers and sisters, and 3) edifying and restoring the weak. Here are some more things that will help us bring glory and praise to God as we work together:
- 4) We have a primary mission to spread the gospel to the lost people of this world (**Mark 16:15**). There are many right here in our immediate community, and millions worldwide, who need to hear about salvation in Christ Jesus. We need the participation of every member to address this urgent need. You can and

must do your part to teach the lost souls within your circle of influence.

5) It should go without saying that every member of this congregation should attend every assembly of the saints (**Hebrews 10:25**). You should make every effort to attend each of our scheduled meetings. Personal schedules should be rearranged, activities dropped or modified, and plans made that will allow you to be present at all of the worship assemblies and Bible studies. School functions, recreational or sporting events, family get-togethers, or things of this sort do not serve as legitimate "excuses" for missing any service. Sickness and other unavoidable circumstances may occasionally arise, but the normal practice of every saint should be to attend every assembly.

6) The only means authorized by God for the financing of the work of the local church is by means of the free will offering of the members. Such a contribution . . . . is collected each Lord's day (**1 Corinthians 16:1,2**). You are expected to give regularly and liberally (**2 Corinthians 9:7**). If travels or other matters cause you to be away from this congregation on a Lord's Day, it certainly seems reasonable that provisions would be made to leave your contribution in advance, or "make up" your offering when you return. Our ongoing work depends upon your consistent giving.

7) Every member of a local body of believers has a personal responsibility to maintain peace with and among their fellow members (**Ephesians 4:1-3**). We acknowledge that situations arise wherein feelings may become hurt or bad judgments may lead to disagreements. It is the duty of each Christian to seek immediate resolution of these matters (**Matthew 5:24; 18:15-17**). Our rule is this: In matters of faith or doctrine we can make no compromise (**Jude 3**), however, in matters of judgment or opinion we should be humbly submissive (**1 Peter 5:6**). Trouble makers, gossips, and those who promote strife cannot be tolerated (**Proverbs 6:16-19**).

Your conscientious effort to fulfill your personal responsibilities in the local congregation are critical to our effectiveness in bring glory to our Lord. Think!

*by Greg Gwin*

## The Jonah Syndrome

The inhabitants of the ancient city of Nineveh were living in wickedness and in need of the message that Jehovah charged His prophet Jonah to preach (**Jonah 1:2**). But where was Jonah? He was *"fast asleep"* on board the ship that he desperately wanted to carry him *"from the presense of the Lord"* (**Jonah 1:3-5**).

He was asleep on the job! God had commanded him to go preach in Nineveh, but Jonah had other plans. Today, the world is lost in sin and headed to eternal condemnation with the devil and his angels (**Mt. 25:41**). Jesus has commanded us to teach the soul-saving gospel to every person in the world (**Mk. 16:15**). Could

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it be that some, as Jonah was, are *"fast asleep"* on the job and giving no real attention to what they can do to more effectively get the gospel to those who are lost? If so, then like Jonah of old, we need to heed the message, *"Awake thou that sleepest..."* (Eph. 5:14; cf. Jonah 1:6).

Finally, after being swallowed by the great fish, Jonah did go to Nineveh and preached God's message. The people repented, and as a result God did not destroy the city (Jonah 3:5-10). Yet, amazingly, Jonah was "exceedingly" displeased and angry (Jonah 4:1). Can you imagine? A prophet of the living God being upset because people had turned from their wickedness to their Creator and thus escaped His wrath!

What about you and me? Do we really join with the angels of heaven and rejoice when men and women, regardless of their racial or cultural background, turn away from sin and turn to the living God (Luke 15:10)? We must! If our greatest joy in life is something other than hearing of or seeing people come to Christ via the gospel for salvation, then we need to adjust our thinking. We must possess the spirit of the apostle Paul, who declared that his *"heart's desire and prayer to God"* was for Israel to be saved (Romans 10:1). A love for lost souls must first burn in our hearts before we will ever go forth to teach God's word to them.

The one thing that made Jonah *"exceeding glad"* was the gourd that God prepared to cover his head from the hot sun (Jonah 4:6). To Jonah's disgust and bitter anger, the next day a God-prepared worm ate the gourd. Jonah's "air conditioner" was gone, and he was one upset fellow! Sounds silly, does it not? A man of God more concerned about keeping himself cool than he was for the souls of those who he had taught? Yet, if we are not careful, we just might find ourselves giving more attention to the building's air conditioner than to preaching to the lost! What would upset us more - our air conditioner "going out", or a friend or neighbor "going out" of this world in a lost condition?

A number of years ago the leadership of a well-known congregation informed a preacher that they would be unable to assist him in his efforts to preach the gospel to the lost of Southeast Asia. Their reason? Several of the members had complained that they were getting wet when they walked from the main part of the building to the "fellowship hall" when it rained. Thus, the church was going to "have to" spend \$5000 to build a covered walkway to keep the members dry (and happy) during bad weather when they made their way to their feasts. Being more disturbed over a little rain on one's head than for lost souls sounds like Jonah, don't you think?

May God help us to set our desires on things above (Colossians 3:2), keeping our priorities straight, and manifesting a genuine compassion for those that are lost. There are 6 billion souls just outside the door.

**By Roger Campbell**

## STEPHEN'S SPEECH IN ACTS 7

Acts chapter seven provides a good summary of Israel's history. The ultimate focus in Stephen's sermon is Jesus. This is true of the entire book of Acts. The main theme of Apostolic preaching throughout Luke's history is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Beginning from Pentecost and continuing throughout Acts, the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead provided the impetus for gospel preaching, the call for faith and repentance, and the expression of faithful living as Christians—people who were dedicated to Christ. Acts 4:12 sums up quite well the absolute importance of Christ. *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."* While Stephen emphasizes Christ and the salvation that only He can provide, he also provides the OT background that pointed men to Christ. Significantly, Stephen incorporates Moses into the preaching of the gospel.

God had made a promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). In time, the working out of that promise included Moses' call to deliver Israel out of Egyptian bondage. *"But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt"* (Acts 7:17). Moses visited the children of Israel in order to save them. At first God's people rejected Moses; he then retreats into exile (Acts 7:23 -29). When Moses returned a second time, he came with the power and wonders that God provided for him. Soon, though, even after the great display of God's power, Israel rejected God and Moses' leadership by worshiping the golden calf.

Moses came to Israel in power and in weakness. He offered salvation twice. The first refusal led to another opportunity to be saved. Israel struggled with their desire to accept Moses' offer, or to return to the fleshpots of Egypt. *"This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear'"* (Acts 7:37). Ultimately, God would raise up a prophet similar to Moses (cf. Deut. 18:18-20). In fact, the story of Jesus begins with the connection to Moses and Israel. *"Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself'"* (Luke 24:25-27).

The gospel story as preached by Stephen and as presented throughout the book of Acts says that Jesus came to save; He visited the whole world in order to provide salvation. Those who refused Stephen's message stoned him to death. We might not engage in such a drastic measure today. But when we reject Christ, the result is the same.

**Randy Harshbarger**

**Eph. 2:19** So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

**1Pet. 2:9** But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

**Psa. 1:1** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

## **HOURS OF WORSHIP**

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

**Visitors welcome**

**We conduct in home Bible Studies**

**We offer Correspondence Courses**

**Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer**

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## **NEWS AND NOTES:**

PLEASE REMEMBER THE  
FOLLOWING IN YOUR PRAYERS:  
GRANT CLOTHIER, MARY CZIRR,  
J.R. DANIEL AND JAN PATRICK.

STEVE WIMP CONTINUES HIS  
RECOVERY AT HOME.

BIBLE CLASSES: SUNDAY AND  
WEDNESDAY: THE THEME OF THE  
BIBLE - JIM STAUFFER

SUNDAY SERMON: TRUE TO GOD  
AND SELF



## **What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

**Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

**Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30

**Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

**Be Baptized** for remission of sins Acts 2:38

**Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10