

He Restrained Them Not

Do you think juvenile delinquency is an evil that is peculiar to our day? If so, then you would do well to read your Bible, particularly such passages as are found in the book of First Samuel.

Eli was judge in Israel and a priest of the living God. When he grew old, instead of his children being a source of joy to that religious leader of olden days, they caused him much heartache and grief. After Eli had heard of the almost unimaginable sins which his sons committed--as recorded in First Samuel 2:22--he said unto them, "Why do ye such things? For I hear of your evil dealings by all this people...it is no good report that I hear. Ye make the Lord's people to transgress" (1 Samuel 2:23,24).

What a tragedy! The sons of this "man of God" were a stumblingblock to the Lord's people! However, the sons (though vile and wicked indeed) were not altogether to blame, for we are told in First Samuel 3:13, "For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Eli did not "curb" his children. He apparently just let them have their way. Perhaps he had the idea that "boys will be boys." Yes, but those boys grew up to be men--"vile men"!

This case alone should be enough to convince us parents that placing restrictions upon our children is needful if we expect them to grow up to be useful citizens and individuals whose manner of life will be worthy of "the gospel of Christ."

Fathers and mothers, think on these things!

- by John Iverson

If You Go To Hell

Going to hell? — not far fetched! Many are headed to hell; Ask Jesus! "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Mt.7:13-14). Likely many reading this — some sitting on church pews saying "amen" are going to hell! Even you! Hell is real; the threat is not imaginary.

But if you go to hell, it is no accident. It is your choice. I know you do not want hell's miseries; you do not deliberately pick that "lake that burns with fire and brimstone." Yet, when you choose the road, you also — necessarily include its destination. Choose booze — choose fornication — choose the "pleasures of this world" — choose to "just live as you please," and you choose hell! — at the end of that road . . . Your choice! — plain and simple! In the words of Joshua, "Choose for yourselves this day..."

If you go to hell, it will be in spite of God. Do not blame God!! "The Lord is ...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2Pet.3:9). God never forces you, overwhelms you, or makes you a robot. Yet He "works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil.2:12). He tries to get you to do right — to listen — to choose the road to heaven. To go to hell, you must reject all God's efforts to the contrary.

If you go to hell, it will be in spite of God's love for you. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (Jno.3:16-18). To go to hell you have to refuse such love; you must "despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering." Otherwise, the "goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Rom.2:4) — and eventually to heaven.

If you go to hell, it will be in spite of Jesus. You, as a sinner, have no sacrifice for sin. There is nothing you can do to free yourself from the guilt and consequence of your sin. It is a hopeless case! Hell looms on the horizon inescapably. Until — until Jesus enters the picture! He volunteers to be that sacrifice for sins. He volunteers to accept your punishment deserved as a sinner. For you, Jesus was scourged as a criminal. For you, Jesus died on the cross as a criminal. For you, his blood was poured out as a sin sacrifice. He changed your prospects from hopeless despair —from inevitable hell to an open door into God's favor, blessings, and heaven. To go to hell, you have to ignore such a sacrifice on your behalf.

If you go to hell, it will be in spite of Christians. They are the ones who pester you trying to persuade you to change your life and turn to God. They just will not leave you alone to go quietly off to hell. To go to hell you have to turn a deaf ear to all their warnings and all their appeals.

Christians are the ones who will not give up on you even when you try and fail miserably. They are there to pick you up and encourage you to try again. To go to hell you have to ignore people who care that much about you — or you may have to get angry with them and then refuse their help and concern.

Christians are the ones who pray for you — even when you quit praying. They pray about your difficulties and your trials in life. They pray about your spiritual weaknesses and your sins. To go to hell, you must fight their prayers to God for you.

Christians are the ones who know what you can be — a son of God reflecting His image. They are not satisfied for you to fail to become all that God can make of you. Christians are patient because they were once where you are — and still have problems with spiritual weaknesses.

To go to hell, you will have to close the door on these people who love you — who love your soul.

Are you not finding it hard to keep on going to hell with such obstacles in your way? In Jesus' words to Saul, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (Act.9:5). Why not just quit trying to go to hell — quit lashing out against those who try to help you — quit turning your back on God who wants to forgive you? Serving God and going to heaven is a tremendous alternative!

- by Joe Fitch

Malchus' Ear

Christians are often disappointed and discouraged when they fail to convince their unbelieving friends and relatives to accept the truth from the Scriptures. They ask questions like: "How can they ignore the evidence?" and "It's so obvious, why can't they see it?" These are good questions. We understand your frustration. We agree – it is not logical for people to ignore the abundance of available proof.

Do you recall the occasion when Judas Iscariot brought a band of armed men to arrest Jesus? Peter, thinking to defend the Lord with force, drew out his sword. Each of the gospel writers describe him cutting off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest. Jesus rebuked Peter, and Luke tells us that He proceeded to heal the severed ear (Luke 22:51). Think about that for a minute! In the presence of this mob of angry conspirators Jesus worked a miracle. They saw it! Yet still they proceeded to participate in the events that led to the unjust murder of God's own Son.

We remind you of this simply to illustrate that prejudiced men have always ignored evidence that contradicts their predetermined positions. If the Scribes and Pharisees could see the many miracles of Jesus and still call for his crucifixion, we should not be too surprised when men today reject the plain truths of God's word.

But, there is another, more positive lesson to be learned here. Jesus said in John 10:18, "*No man taketh (my life) from me but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*" In healing Malchus' ear, Jesus proved His point. By working that miracle He showed that He - at that moment - had unlimited power to save His own life, but He refused to use it. He voluntarily laid down His life for our sins. What a Savior!

- by Greg Gwin