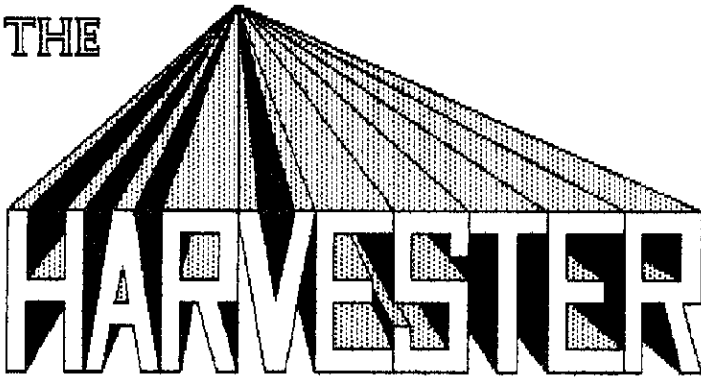


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"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

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JUSTIFYING ERROR

Who among us has not sinned? Truthfully, nobody can raise their hand in response to that question. *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23). In fact, for many of us it is a daily struggle. *"Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Pet. 5:8). The devil is so adept at presenting luring temptations that we are constantly falling over ourselves. Unfortunately, the majority of today's people refuse to take responsibility for their sins. To them it is a game of justifying error.

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What exactly do we mean by "justifying error"? First of all we are not talking about acknowledging our sins. We all know the difference between right and wrong. We all know when we have made a mistake. There is usually no question about whether we broke a rule or not because the law is obvious. Like the little child who gets caught with his hand in the cookie jar, we cannot deny our mistakes. The problem comes when we try to justify our error. This refers to the point when we try to show that our sin was rational. "Yes, I know what I did was wrong but don't blame me! There is a very good reason why I did that." Friends, is there ever any justification for doing the wrong thing? In our minds we attempt to declare ourselves guiltless although it is obvious to everyone else that we erred. How many times have we sinned and then turned around to supply a "good reason" for our errant behavior?

In particular, members of the Lord's church are just as guilty as the world when it comes to justifying error. Of all the people, we ought to know better! Our feeble attempts to justify sin is nothing more than a disguise to pardon our dear conscience. When we justify error, we are in truth trying to show that there is a lawful ground for committing sin. But the Bible reveals there is never a valid reason to disobey God's commandments, no matter what the situation.

We have done a good job convincing ourselves that sin is okay under certain

circumstances. Maybe we learned this trick from the first created man, Adam. He had just eaten the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6). There is no question that he knew he had erred. Why else would he try to hide from God? Yet he made the situation worse by trying to justify his disobedience. His defense? *"The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat"* (Gen. 3:12). Adam never denied his sin. He merely shifted the blame to Eve (whom God gave to Adam!). Surely he did not expect to be held responsible for this mishap. It was out of his control, wasn't it?

The classic example of one who tried to justify his errors has to be King Saul. In 1 Sam. 13:8-14, Saul was waiting for Samuel the priest to arrive and offer the sacrifice. He full well knew that it was Samuel's duty to perform such a service. That explains why Saul waited and waited because he was aware of the proper procedure according to the Law. But then he ran out of patience and offered the burnt offering himself. Without a doubt he violated God's commandment. When Samuel asked him about the situation, Saul did not deny his error. Instead, he tried to justify it. He warranted his disobedient actions by stating the graveness of the situation (vs. 11-12).

King Saul tried to justify another error in 1 Sam. 15 when he failed to utterly destroy the Amalekites. Again we notice that he had no trouble understanding the instructions given to him. Samuel was very specific when he relayed God's order

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such that any school child today would have no misunderstanding. And once again we see that Saul did not try to deny his error but rather, he tried to warrant them. Sure enough he had good intentions but that could never justify his transgression. *"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"* (1 Sam. 15:22). Saul needed to quit making excuses for his sins and start accepting the burden.

Saul's lamentable examples show us how pitiful it gets when God's own people try to justify their errors. Christians know as well as anyone else today what is right and wrong in God's sight. Yet how sad when these very same people choose to explain away their errors rather than try to correct them.

How often have we seen musically-gifted disciples decide that it is "okay" to use mechanical instruments to worship God? So what if they totally disregard Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16. They eventually join a denomination and justify their error by saying something like this: "Well, God gave me this talent and surely he wouldn't want me to waste it. At this

place they like it when I play my guitar in their church service."

How often have we seen a sister of the church leave her husband and children behind and marry another man? Surely she knows that in Mark 10:12 it plainly says, "*She that divorces and marries another commits adultery*". Yet she justifies her immoral behavior by stating how lonely she truly was in her former relationship. She knows God wants her to be happy, therefore it was all right for her to find another man. The first one was a hasty mistake. She didn't really know what she was doing at the time. Now she has found her true love and perfect mate. Never mind about 1 Cor. 7:11.

And how often have we seen a whole family forsake the Lord's church and begin attending a congregation that espouses the class system of teaching the Bible? Although the deserters know they can never prove that the early church used this arrangement (1 Cor. 14:31), the family warrants their action by claiming, "There just weren't enough young people around and there were never any activities to keep our children busy. Also, my wife wanted to start teaching a Bible class." Yet these excuses do not justify their error.

For every sin in the world, the devil can supply a very good justification. But God says sin can never be sanctioned, no matter what the reason. Justifying error is simply man's way of absolving his responsibility for his mistakes. Yes, we all make mistakes, but let us resolve to

confess and repent of our sins (1 Jn. 1:7-9), instead of trying to justify them and continue living in them. There can never be a valid reason for transgressing God's law. There is simply no justification for sin!

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What name was given a child meaning, "Because I have asked him of the Lord"?
2. In what direction did Ezekiel see the cloud that contained the vision from God?
3. Who placed all things under Christ's feet?
4. For whose sake does Peter say one should obey the laws of the land?
5. What priestly garment was designed to cover the heart?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who was the second judge of Israel who delivered them from Eglon, king of Moab?
EHUD (Judg. 3:15)
2. When is man usually tempted, according to James? WHEN HE IS DRAWN AWAY OF HIS OWN LUST (Jas. 1:14)

3. According to Isaiah, though your sins be as scarlet, what shall they be?
WHITE AS SNOW (Isa. 1:18)

4. Which gospel account of the Bible is the shortest? GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

5. What did Abraham carry as he and Isaac ascended the mountain together? FIRE AND A KNIFE (Gen. 22:6)

ANOTHER FALSE PROPHET?

In Matthew 7:15 Jesus told us to beware of false prophets. He said they would come to deceive the world by showing great signs and wonders (2 Thes. 2:9-11). Some would even go so far as to lie by predicting the end of the world (Matt. 24:36,42). Now we hear reports that such a false prophet has arrived in the U.S.

According to Knight-Ridder Newspapers, the group is formally known as the God and Buddha Salvation Foundation. It is a Taiwanese cult that moved to Garland, Texas to await the arrival of God -- via flying saucer -- and the apocalyptic destruction of their homeland.

The group members call themselves followers of "Jen Dao," or "The Way of Truth." It had about 150 members in Texas by last Christmas. Two of the Taiwanese men claim to be the reincarnation of Buddha and Jesus Christ.

(continued next page)

GOSPEL MEETING

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
March 13 - 15 (F-Su)	Fayetteville Road Fairburn, GA 7:30pm Fri & Sat 10:30am & 6:00pm Sun	Bruce Kessler (Norman, OK)

* * * * *

(continued from page 7)

The leader of this cult is Chen Hon-ming, 42, a social science professor who in 1993 began espousing a mix of Christian, Buddhist and New Age beliefs. "We just follow God's instructions," says Chen, whose disciples say he speaks to God through his hand. He has also revealed that "2000 years ago I was the father of Jesus Christ."

According to Chen, on March 31, 1998 at precisely 10 a.m. in Garland, God will step onto Earth and have the physical appearance of Chen himself. Then in January 1999 China will go to war against Taiwan. In February the second Korean War will break out. June and July will see the economic collapse of East Asia. In August three nuclear power plants will explode in Taiwan. Then a nuclear bomb will detonate in the Middle East in October, on Jesus' true birthday. During this great Tribulation of 1999, God's flying saucers will carry off the survivors.

So far everyone who has predicted the end of the world has been wrong. I suppose only time will tell if Mr. Chen's "guess" is as good as the others.

RAY