

# VIGIL



*“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

*~ I Peter 5:8*

Volume XXXV No. 2

March/April 2007

**How Shall The Young Secure Their Hearts?**

## **PROGRESS**

**Tom Larkin**

The song that serves as the theme of this issue of the Vigil poses an important question. Living a successful Christian life is never easy. This is true for all of us, but especially for young Christians. While the temptations faced by our young people today are not new (cf. Hebrews 4:15), certainly they are no less troublesome than in days gone by. The avenues by which Satan attacks are many and temptations come from every side. As has been true from the beginning, it takes great courage and effort to live for the Lord. Spiritual growth and faithfulness to God is a choice that we must make. Growth will not happen by accident – we must do so on purpose.

Continued faithfulness is possible only if we grow and mature in faith and in our Christian life. We give the devil the upper hand when we wait until temptation comes to decide how to react. Paul warned the church at Ephesus, “Neither give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:27). The context reveals how to handle temptation when it comes. Many of the examples that Paul gives in this context have to do with our speech. Whether it is the temptation to lie (v. 25), to lash out in

anger (v. 26) or to use corrupt speech (v. 29), we can avoid sinning with the tongue. But that avoidance is possible only if we put forth the effort to control the tongue. The psalmist said, “Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress” (Psalm 17:3). Such a purpose does not make us immune to sin – but it puts us in a far better position to overcome.

When Darius signed the law that prohibited prayer Daniel already knew how he would respond – “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Daniel 6:10). Daniel was able to respond in this fashion because early in his life “he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor the wine which he drank” (Daniel 1:8). Daniel was willing to give up his place in the kingdom of Babylon, but he was not willing to give up his place

in God’s kingdom. Having made up his mind he was prepared to do right even when it was difficult or dangerous.

Our young people will “secure their hearts” only when they purpose in their hearts to do right. This was the exhortation of Barnabas when he came to the church at Antioch – “Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (Acts 11:23). “Cleaving to the Lord” equals faithfulness to God and obedience to his word. For example, after Moses had delivered the law to Israel, he gave this encouragement to the people: “That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days” (Deuteronomy 30:20). To “cleave unto him” is to “obey his voice.” Obedience to God is a choice – either we will choose to obey or we will choose to disobey, but regardless, we will make the choice.

Continued on page 16

## HOW CAN OUR CHILDREN PROTECT THEMSELVES?

Ronnie Hayes

### *Editorial*

This issue of the Vigil is dealing with our young people. We often sing the song, “How shall the young secure their hearts?” This is a very important question for parents and for children. Why is this so important? Because of the adversary we face. Satan is described as, “...your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). He is a cunning liar. “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). He glorifies the physical and devalues the spiritual. “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:8,9). With such a powerful adversary, how can our children protect themselves?

Parents will play a role in children protecting themselves. It is imperative that we teach our children the truth of God’s word. Moses commanded the parents of his days, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:6,7). Why is it important to teach our children? Moses answers this “...lest thou forget the Lord” (Deuteronomy

6:12). As parents, we are also to train our children. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). The rule is: proper training gives us the result we desire. But when we fail as parents to train our children properly, the results are usually devastating. The Bible tells us that Eli didn’t restrain his sons (1 Samuel 3:13) and because of that his sons were very wicked (1 Samuel 3:22-25), ultimately they were slain (1 Samuel 4:11). Are we helping our children to protect themselves?

The word of God will provide our children with everything they need to prevail against their adversary. For our children to protect themselves the greatest gift we can give them is the Word of God. The Word of God will arm them. Paul told the Church at Ephesus to put on the whole armor of God. “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:13-17). Prepared with the armor of God, our children will be able to stand against the wiles of the devil and to answer all of the arguments. When Satan was tempting Christ, Christ answered with “IT IS WRITTEN” (Matthew 4:4,7,10). Without the Word of God, how would our children be able to determine what is right or wrong? The Word of God gives them everything they need in life and godliness. Peter wrote, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and

godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3). Truth sets men free. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The Word of God is truth. “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Christ pointed to the value of the scriptures. “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). May we be wise enough to give our children what they need to protect themselves.

The Faith must become their own for children to protect themselves. Jeremiah uses the children of Rechab as an illustration of obedience to Israel. Jeremiah said, “The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father’s commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me” (Jeremiah 35:14). How is it that generation after generation carried out the words of their fathers? It is because each generation made the commands their own command. The same is true of our children. Parents help us get started, the Word of God arms us, but will we pick these commands up and make them ours? If we don’t, we will never protect ourselves from Satan’s snares! Have you ever wondered why some people quit the church after their parents die? It is simple. They were living on the faith of their parents and not their own faith. If we never grow to where The Faith is ours we will not stand for the truth, defend, teach, or even live, as we should.

How can our children protect themselves? With our help, armed with the Word of God and adding the Word to their lives, they will have a fighting chance.

*VIGIL* is published under the oversight of the elders of the Adamsville Church of Christ **Ronnie Hayes**, Editor, and **Ashley Kizer**, Associate Editor. You may go to our website [www.acoc.org](http://www.acoc.org) to read and download archived issues of *Vigil*.

## PEERS – CHOOSING THE RIGHT ASSOCIATES

Sam Willcut

First, when discussing the importance of choosing the right associates, we begin by noting that peers have to do with *relationships*. In fact, Christianity is all about relationships—our relationship with God, our relationship with self and our relationship with others (family, friends, brethren, neighbors, strangers, enemies and such like). With such in mind, it should not be difficult to understand that choosing the right associates (peers) is quite important in our lives. Truth be told, choosing the right associates is the integral factor in a multiplicity of situations where young people either remain faithful and continue building the foundation that their parents helped to lay or become unfaithful and abandon their faith in God. In fact, one can know the kind of person we are by the type of relationships we have. This is why parents must develop strong relationships with their children so that they can monitor carefully with whom their children associate. According to one study published in *The Washington Times* years ago, 12% of parents thought their children had friends with drug problems, but 36% actually had. This shows the disparity between the parent-child relationship concerning the importance of monitoring the associations of children.

Second, we must choose the *right* associates. Friends come in all shapes and sizes—casual friends, close friends and best friends. A friend is someone with whom we can obtain true happiness (cf. Proverbs 27:9). An old adage rings true: “It is better to pick your friends than to let your friends pick you.” Thus, friends do not come accidentally—we must choose them. Solomon wrote, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise:

but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20). To choose the right associates who are our appropriate peers, we need to know the type of person who should be our friend. “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17). Thus, the right associates are willing to be a friend in times of need; they do not abandon us at the time we need them the most. In addition, they respect and even share our convictions. Undoubtedly, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego encouraged one another as they remained faithful to the will of God (Daniel 3). Consider the example of David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:1-4). They are the inspired illustrations of divine wisdom: “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). David and Jonathan developed their relationship through their common devotion to God (1 Samuel 14:6; 17:45-47).

Third, we must *resist* the wrong associates. An inspired father once warned his son, “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not...My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path” (Proverbs 1:10, 15). In the New Testament, Paul warned, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33). The very beginning of this exhortation shows the nature of deception in the area. Naturally, far too many of our young people fall prey to the evil influences of wrong associations. Paul gave earlier in this epistle the dangerous manner of wrong associations: “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (1 Corinthians 5:6). Consider the example of King Herod—were it

not for the evil associations at his birthday party, he may not have murdered John the Baptist (Matthew 14:6-10). Consider the example of King Rehoboam—because he listened to wrong associates who were his peers, he made the wrong choice and divided the nation (1 Kings 12:1-24). Consider the example of the prodigal son—no doubt, the history of the world teaches that while he was participating in “riotous living,” he probably had plenty of wrong associations to assist in such impropriety (Luke 15:11-32). Consider the example of Napoleon—as a young cadet in military school, he said to a companion who had formed degrading associations: “I have succeeded in keeping your morals pure. Your new friends will destroy you. Choose between them and me. There is no middle ground.” After the third warning, he said, “You have despised my warnings and renounced my friendship. Never speak to me again.” Unfortunately, for the sake of purity of character, we must break some relationships that harbor in evil and immorality. Therefore, the way to resist wrong associations is to make up our minds ahead of time—know what kind of people to avoid and what kind of people with whom you should associate!

Friendship with the right kind of people is one of the richest blessings one could ever have. For one not only to believe in us, but to speak good of us, uphold our honor and integrity when others are trying to drag us down is more valuable than any material blessing one could ever obtain. Praise be unto God for our godly associations who are the right type of peers!

PO Box 127  
Mumford, TN 38058

## PRESSURE – WHERE DOES TEMPTATION COME FROM?

Ashley Kizer

The pressure to do right or wrong can come from a variety of sources. Each day is filled with a series of opportunities to serve God, and almost instinctively we will look to some outside source to help us make our decisions. King Solomon wrote, “Every purpose is established by counsel...” (Proverbs 20:18). Consider the events of the day you have experienced so far. You made the usual decisions, when to get out of bed, what to eat for breakfast, what to take for lunch, etc. You also made decisions about whether or not to pray and whether or not to seek opportunities for evangelism. With each decision, you must have experienced some sort of influence. For example, if you prayed to God, who pressured you to do so? If you passed on an opportunity to share the gospel, from where did that temptation come?

Our young people are often told that “peer pressure” is their arch enemy. Paul’s admonition to the Corinthian brethren is regularly cited: “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33). Certainly, there is a lot of pressure that comes from society. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah experienced a great deal of pressure intermingled with the culture shock of being brought from Judah to Babylon. They were offered “a daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine which he drank” (Daniel 1:5, 6). The stakes were even higher when they were later threatened to be thrown into a fiery furnace for not bowing down to the king’s golden image, or thrown to the lions for not ceasing to pray (cf. Daniel 3:15; 6:16). So our occupations have always entailed numerous influences to participate in unrighteousness.

Society seems to be relentless in its quest to influence our actions in one way or another. We have learned

what it means to be “popular” and “rich” from the movie stars and athletes. Advertisements are so presumptuous that they actually tell us what we want. We have been wooed by the world and courted by commercialism. Will we be wise enough to sever this relationship before we are wed to wickedness? John continues to warn us: “Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world” (1 John 2:15). His reasoning is simple: “the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (v. 17). If we allow ourselves to be pressured by society, we may eventually be pushed into the servitude of a cruel taskmaster (cf. Romans 6:16).

Satan also exerts pressure on the child of God. Cartoon images of a silly character with a pointy tail and a pitchfork have painted a weak picture of our adversary, but they in no way diminish his power of influence in today’s world. We must consider that this ominous creature was successful in tempting our Lord (Matthew 4:1). Are we so foolish to believe that we will somehow be immune to his schemes (cf. Ephesians 6:11)? It is important that we do not “give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:27). The Bible never deemphasizes his power. As a matter of fact, Jesus referred to him as “the prince of this world” (John 12:31). He is a formidable foe who “walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

However, there is an even greater source of pressure than society or Satan and it is inescapable. The most powerful source of pressure is one’s self. Proverbs 16:32 states, “*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*” Truly, we must learn to harness the influence of our own desires. Jesus said, “If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily,

and follow me” (Luke 9:23). The Christian life is one of sacrifice and striving to become like someone else – Christ Himself (cf. Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 2:20). If we ever stray from His pattern, we may be drawn away by our own lust. James wrote, “...every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14). King David learned this all too well when his lust led him to commit adultery and murder one of his mighty men (cf. 2 Samuel 11). Judas knew it too (cf. Luke 22:3-6). How will we manage to withstand the pressures that constantly wage war against our souls?

Paul said, “I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:27). Yes, even the apostles of our Lord had to work constantly so that they would not give in to the pressures that surrounded them. You and I can probably relate well to what Paul wrote to the Romans: “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I” (7:15). This is a harsh reality that the spirit may be willing, but the flesh is so weak. Sufficient for the Christian is the encouragement that Paul gave the Philippians: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (4:13).

4207 Veterans Memorial Drive  
Adamsville, AL 35005

“You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice;”

Exodus 23:2

## PENALTIES

James E. Rogers

There are penalties in life when youth disobey God's laws. Consequences follow every action we take. We all need to reflect seriously upon our actions and try to see where they will lead before we launch into them. There are good and bad consequences in life. This article will focus on some warnings from Solomon to youth and the penalties that will come from disregarding those warnings.

Youth are not to **forsake instruction and law**. When a youth forsakes instruction and law he becomes foolish (Proverbs 1:7). "The fool is spiritually rebellious, indifferent to divine counsel, and rejects the fear of the Lord" (Wolf 463). Harris recorded the following concerning the word translated "fool" in this passage:

Such a person is lacking in sense and is generally corrupt... [He] identifies himself as soon as he opens his mouth... the fool quarrels at any time (Proverbs 20:3). He cannot restrain himself... A fool has no balance in his relations with others... This kind of fool despises wisdom and is impatient with discipline... the boastful or babbling fool who rejects [godly instruction] will fall down by the predicaments he makes for himself (Prov 10:8). Because a fool feels that his own way is without error, he does not seek or listen to counsel... The fool is overbearing in his attitude since he has all the answers (Proverbs 12:15)... Even if a fool were pounded with a pestle in a mortar along with the grain, no desirable results would follow (Proverbs 27:22) (Harris 1:19).

Jesus called this type of person a "foolish man" (Matthew 7:26-27). The self-willed, headstrong youth who will listen to no one is headed for heartache. If the youth persists in foolish behavior, he will eventually conclude, "There is no God" (Psalms 14:1).

On the other hand, when a child keeps the instruction of his father and the law of his mother, he is adorned in a way that brings blessings to him (Proverbs 1:8,9). These things were the height of that which was joyous and glorious. This instruction is to be bound upon the heart and tied about the neck so as to be a constant companion (6:20,21). The youth who forsakes instruction and law forfeits a guide for his steps, a protector and a companion (6:23). "No outward charm, but the law of obedience, shall give safety to the traveller, in his journey, when he sleeps or when he wakes" (Cook 546). He is pictured here as one whose light has been put out. Forsaking instruction and law leads to fornication and all the hurtful things that accompany it (Proverbs 6:24-35). Sin is especially appealing to the young and inexperienced. Instruction and law are intended to prevent the harmful effects of sin.

Youth are not to **forget the law and commandments**. "Fritsch says: 'One of the golden words of religion is 'remember''" (Wolf 469). The law and commandments are to be in the heart (Proverbs 3:1). "When the heart keeps God's precepts as a precious treasure, the memory does not easily forget them" (Jamieson, Faussett and Brown 419). If the son is wise to not forget the law and commandments, he will enjoy prolonged life, peace, kindness, truth, acceptance with God and man (Proverbs 3:2-4). He will live a life that is truly worth living. The one who keeps the law and commandments is the one who trusts God and follows His will (3:5,6). This youth will know not to follow his own subjective standard (3:7), but will follow the standard of Jehovah and prosper (3:7,8). "The **navel** and **bones** are used as symbols for the entire body. A knowledge of God that leads to spiritual well-being has its

effects on the psychological and physical aspects of human personality" (Wolf 470). This youth will give to Jehovah and reap the benefits (Proverbs 3:9,10).

This youth will benefit from the chastening of Jehovah and enjoy the love of Jehovah (Proverbs 3:11,12; Job 5:17; Psalms 94:12). "Chastening" "signifies *correction, discipline, and instruction*. Teaching is essentially necessary to show the man the way in which he is to go; *discipline* is necessary to render that teaching effectual; and, often, *correction* is requisite in order to bring the mind into *submission*, without which it cannot acquire *knowledge*" (Clarke 708, emphasis his). No matter the circumstance, God's children are never separated from His love (Romans 8:38-39; Hebrews 12:4-13; Revelation 3:19).

Youth who are accountable will suffer the consequences of their actions (Proverbs 28:24; 30:17). This shows the necessity of proper training for them. Above all things, they need to be taught the importance of obeying the will of God. Let them cling to God's will and never forget it as they live. May doing God's will become the most important thing in life for them. Let us help our youth avoid the negative penalties of life here so they may live hereafter.

### WORKS CITED

- Clarke, Adam. *Clarke's Commentary*. Vol. 3. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1824.
- Cook, F. C. *The Bible Commentary*. Vol. 4. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981.
- Harris, R. Laird. *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*. Vols. 1,2. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.
- Jamieson, Robert, Faussett, A. R. and Brown, David. *A Commentary on the Old And New Testaments*. Vol. 2, Part 1. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997.
- Wolf, Earl C. *Beacon Bible Commentary*. Vol. 3. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press Of Kansas City, 1967.

P.O. Box 2895  
Cookville, TN 38502

## EXPLORING PARENTAL DUTIES

Mel Futrell

In 380 B.C. the Greek Philosopher Plato wrote, “For children are your riches; and upon their turning out well or ill depends the whole order of their father’s house.” Although this statement is not God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16), it could not be more true. How children turn out is very much related to the kind of training they do or don’t receive in “their father’s house.” With some legislators in California currently proposing a ban on parental spanking, we can’t emphasize enough that parents have duties. And these duties are a function of the home, not the state. What might some of these duties be?

First, parents have the duty to teach their children. Certainly all Christians would agree that such teaching should begin with the Holy Scriptures (Romans 1:2). Any way about it, the home should be a school of learning. Under the Law of Moses parents had the daily duty of dispensing the commandments of God to their children. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 says, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” In the New Testament we see a perfect example of what should happen from the home life of Timothy. The apostle Paul was fully aware that from a child, Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15). It is likewise transparently obvious that his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice were responsible for this teaching (2 Timothy 1:5). We must take seriously the duty of teaching our children. If we are truly seeking “first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33), won’t this be manifested in the teaching of our children?

Second, parents have the duty to provide for their children. This of course requires that parents work. 1 Timothy 5:8 reads, “but if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” In the immediate context this verse is addressing provision for the widow. Providing for one’s family is a fundamental Christian duty. Children are family. Thus, children are to be provided for. Who would deny that his would include reasonable housing, proper clothing, and adequate food? Paul describes the lazy person who fails to provide for his own as being “worse than an infidel.” It is evident that some don’t have a mind for work (Nehemiah 4:6), and their children end up paying the price for their parent’s laziness.

Third, parents have the duty to control their children. As a preacher who is in scores of different homes every year where many times children are present, I know what it is to leave a home questioning who is in charge. It seems to me that in order for control to be present there must be some who command and others who comply. I remind you that Ephesians 6:1 says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” That really ought to settle the matter. However, permit me to share with you what the Bible commentator Matthew Henry (\*1662-1714), had to say about Paul’s words, “It is the order of nature that parents command and children obey” (Matthew Henry’s Commentary In One Volume, p655). As you know, it was relative to this very issue wherein old Eli failed. The Scriptures say of this family, “because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” (1 Samuel 3:13). Countless Christian families have paid a steep price because they too failed to control their kids.

Fourth, parents have the duty to correct their children. And this

correction will on occasion take the form of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is physical punishment – that which affects the body. Several statements from the book of Proverbs deal directly with the discipline of children. Consider this sampling:

\*He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (13:24)

\*Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying (19:18).

\*Foolishness bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (22:15)

In the New Testament the matter of correction is dealt with in Hebrews 12:9 which reads, “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?” Of special note is the word “corrected,” which is from the Greek *Paideutes* meaning “one who disciplines.” Interestingly, *Paideutes* is from *paideno* which means, depending on the context, to “instruct, train, teach, discipline, correct, whip, scourge, beat” (A Concise Greek—English Dictionary of the New Testament, p. 130). To correct, even to physically correct, one’s child is not to abuse that child but to administer the proper discipline.

The habits that our children form now, whether good or bad, will likely be with them throughout their lives. Surely this should be motivation enough to propel us toward our parental duties.

959 Alford Ave  
Birmingham, AL 35226

## PERSEVERANCE

Bobby Liddell

The everlasting tragedy of one's "almost" becoming a Christian, as shown by King Agrippa's negative response to Paul's persuasion (Acts 26:28), should serve as a warning to all. "Almost cannot avail. Almost is but to fail. Sad, sad that bitter wail, 'Almost but lost.'" Equally sad is when one, who has begun the Christian life, almost perseveres to the end, but quits before his race is over (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrew 12:1ff). A Christian is not to be "almost," but altogether what God would have him to be (Acts 26:29). In order to last, to keep on keeping on, to continue faithfully to the end (i.e., to persevere), there are some things a Christian must put "first."

Perseverance comes by one's keeping the "First commandment." A Christian loves God, reciprocating the love God first extended to him (1 John 4:19). Thus, Jesus commanded our love for God be, "with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). The Savior said: "This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:38).

Perseverance comes by one's putting first things first. Agrippa's problem may have begun with his putting himself first. Instead of focusing on self, a Christian focuses on God first, others second, and self last. Thus, a Christian seeks, "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," and trusts God's blessings will follow (Matthew 6:33).

Perseverance comes by one's first counting the cost. Jesus emphasized the responsibility of one's counting the cost before beginning (Luke 14:28). A Christian considers what he has to give up, to leave, and to begin to do. A Christian counts the cost of obeying righteousness, instead of sin (as well as the cost of continuing in sin and of forfeiting Heaven for Hell).

Perseverance comes by one's first giving himself to God. Perhaps King Agrippa, though "almost" responding positively, could not move past the point of giving himself to God. Paul praised the Macedonian brethren for their abundance of liberality in that they, "first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Corinthians 8:5). A Christian is one who first gives himself to God.

Perseverance comes by one's making his first job to find others. "We are saved, to save" (cf. Mark 16:15-16). When Andrew found Christ, "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (John 1:41). It is easy to put evangelism in last place, instead of "first" finding others in order to bring them to Christ.

Perseverance comes by one's first thanking God. Paul was a great man of prayer, and expressed his gratitude to God. To the Romans, he wrote these encouraging words: "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (Romans 1:18). The "attitude of gratitude" not only manifests itself in faithful, sacrificial service, but also in frequent, fervent prayers.

Perseverance comes by one's having faith first then reaching out to others. The "unfeigned faith," which dwelt in Timothy, "dwelt first" in his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). A Christian reaches others, planting seeds of faith in their hearts (cf. Luke 8:11). Before he can do so, a Christian must first have that faith dwelling in him.

Perseverance comes by one's keeping fellowship from the first. To his brethren at Philippi, Paul wrote: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship

in the gospel from the first day until now (Philippians 1:3-5). A Christian is an eager joint participant in, and a continuing supporter and encourager of, good works.

Perseverance comes by one's first having a willing mind. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Corinthians 8:12). Many good results come from a willing mind. It is amazing how much a Christian can accomplish, with God's help, when he sets his mind to the task.

Perseverance comes by one's first seeking reconciliation. A Christian knows that, in order to be right with God, he must be right with his fellow man. Jesus taught: "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:24). Surely, a Christian would want, and seek reconciliation with his brother.

Perseverance comes by one's first casting the beam out of his own eye. Christ taught: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5). A Christian understands his own needs and shortcomings; thus, he is more understanding of others. Therefore, he is first a beam remover, then a mote caster.

There are many "firsts" in a Christian's life, but in order to persevere, to last, a Christian must put himself last, and serve God humbly. God exalts such a man to first (Mark 9:35). A Christian has gone from lost to saved, outside Christ to being in Christ, hopeless to hopeful, and from an eternity in Hell, to Heaven—because he has put first things first—which enables him to last; that is, to persevere.

3950 Foresthill Irene Rd.  
Memphis, TN 38125

Non Profit  
Organization  
US Postage  
Paid  
Permit #80316  
Anniston, AL

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**Progress by Tom Larkin** -----continued from page 9

David is another example of how spiritual growth helps us to overcome. Saul rejected David's offer to fight Goliath because he was "but a youth" (1 Samuel 17:33). Certainly, in a battle determined by physical strength alone, this Philistine champion would prevail. Furthermore, David lacked the military know-how possessed by one who was a "man of war from his youth" like this giant (1 Samuel 17:33). In spite of this, David fought against and prevailed over Goliath. He gives credit for his success to God in whom he had placed his trust. Notice his statement to Saul --"The LORD

that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:37). Notice that his trust is based upon what God has done in the past. Through these occasions David has learned that God can be trusted. If like David our young people can say "thou art my trust from my youth" (Psalm 71:3) then they also will be able to overcome even the mightiest temptations.

So how do young Christians grow and mature so that they can secure their hearts and guard their

lives from sin? There is no secret answer or shortcut to growth -- it takes a determined purpose, diligent effort and consistent application of Biblical principles in life. Through daily reading and study of the Bible, fervent and persistent prayer and regular association with those of like precious faith, our young people will be able to "secure their hearts and guard their lives from sin."

76 Antioch Rd.  
Somerville, AL 35670

#### **WORKS BY FRANKLIN CAMP AND BOBBY DUNCAN**

Redemption Through the Bible, Preacher's Class, Sermons on CD in MP3 format *Redemption Through the Bible* is a series of Bible studies through the entire Bible that was studied primarily at the Adamsville congregation. The entire set is now available and contained on a total of 44 CD's in MP3 format. We now have available his Preacher's Class and Sermons. The Preacher's Class has a total of (12) and his sermons are contained on (2) CD's. Each CD's cost is \$5.00 plus tax and shipping. We now have available six books: *The Work of the Holy Spirit In Redemption* (\$14.95), *A study of the Book of Colossians* (\$3.95), *A study of the Book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon* (\$3.95) *A study of the Book of Job* (\$3.95) by **Franklin Camp**, and *The Gift of the Holy Ghost* (\$4.95) and *Sermon Outlines* (\$14.95) by **Bobby Duncan** (Add tax and postage.) You may order these books or CD's by calling (205) 674-5659 or e-mailing Brother's Inc. at [acofc@bellsouth.net](mailto:acofc@bellsouth.net). (Please include your address and phone number.)