

"contending earnestly for the faith ..." Jude :3

Responsibility

Kids are cute. Not only that, they come out with the funniest things.

"May I have a lolly?"

"What's the magic word?"

"Err, abracadabra."

But kids, especially the very young ones, have no sense of responsibility. "I did it 'cause little sister told me to. It's not my fault."

Fortunately, little kids grow out of that stage and become big kids. They become aware of responsibility. They learn to make excuses - these days it's all high tech. "Yes sir, I did email my homework. I must have accidentally sent it to another address." "Sorry, but the computer has been playing up..."

And big kids develop into older youth - adults. More responsibility. Greater expectations. A knowledge that excuses are useless.

Someone said "Make an effort, not an excuse." Because it's no secret - you will have to give account - to Father.

Well now, why these words? It's quite simple. Your Contender means you need to contend. So do it. This is a call for interesting, relevant articles.

As young adults (but adults nevertheless), you are required to make an effort. Don't know what to write about? Contact the editors - there is a "topic list" available. Don't have the ability? Nor did Moses, and he led a nation through a wilderness for 40 years. Afraid of your peers and afraid for your reputation? Find me someone who isn't.

This magazine will "encourage it's readers to earnestly contend for the faith, and to think and act Biblically..." If you disagree with something written, we welcome your letter. By all means, call a spade a spade, provided it isn't a toothpick. Be open, honest and above all Biblically based. And then we'll have an interesting magazine, one meeting its stated aims.

Welcome to Contender, 2004.

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Aim:

Romans 12:2 teaches all of God's people:

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

This magazine will encourage it's readers to earnestly contend for the faith, and to think and act biblically, in the good traditions of the Church of all ages. It's basis is God's word, as the Church confesses in the Three Formd of Unity. It is intended for the younger members of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and is produced in co-operation with the Una Sancta. Subscription to the Contender is automatic with subscription to the una Sancta.

It is not meant to be exclusively for unmarried members who still attend the Youth Bible Study Clubs, but for all those who fit within the loose parameters of 16 to 30 years of age.

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7th Commandment a student's perspective

The following was recently produced by a Year 10 student of JCCC for the subject Health: Relationships. It forms a (relatively small) part of an assignment titled "Research project about the Seventh Commandment". In this section the following question was addressed: "In your estimation will there be greater disregard for the 7th commandment in time to come?" The student wishes to remain anonymous.

P.O. Posthuma (teacher)

There is a rapid decline in standards and good morals in our society. In Biblical times if adultery or sexual activity occurred outside of marriage, both parties would usually be stoned or severely punished. During the 1500's through to the 1900's women were looked down upon if they bore a child out of wedlock and it was hard for them to earn some kind of living because they were thought of as unclean, or immoral.

In our society this kind of sexual activity is considered to be a usual occurrence. Satan uses various forms of entertainment to tempt us and to lure us away from God. Nowadays in movies and TV shows sexuality is exploited and nudity is made public. Bedroom scenes are included in order to attract and excite the viewers. It appeals to the lust of our flesh, and leads us into temptation. James tells us: "...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1: 14, 15). Temptations are greater for us today than they have ever been before because Satan knows his time is short, and he wants to lure us away in any way he can. This is easiest by appealing to the lusts of the flesh.

Another way Satan tries to tempt us is through the type of clothing which is on the market. As teenagers we want to follow the latest fashions. Lately mothers find it hard to find 'normal', decent clothes for their daughters. Many clothes reveal the most intimate parts of the body, such as hip-hugging pants and midriff exposing tops. In recent years there has been

quite a significant change in clothing trends. Today the motto is: tighter and smaller is better. Fashion industries know that 'sex sells' and they do whatever they can to sell their clothing. When walking through shops you will always see skimpy clothes such as midriff tops, mini skirts and strap shirts.

'As time goes on we can see a breakdown of everything that is good and right.'

Many young children get their 'ideal figure' image from pop stars such as Britney Spears, Kylie Minogue and Christina Aguilera, who wear revealing clothes, as if to say "Look at me, isn't my body great?" Through these pop-princesses a message is sent out which goes directly against God's commands. We may not, in our conduct or provocative dress, cause someone to lust after us.

As time goes on we can see a breakdown of everything that is good and right. As they say, anything goes. Do whatever you like as long as you think of the consequences. One example of this decline of good morals is that now in Darwin there is a proposal to have a 'condom tree' for anyone to make use of. If this is not promoting unlawful sexual activity, what is?

Earlier in history, when television and radio were not yet invented, young people did not have temptations such as we young people have to face daily in our modern, wicked society. We must remember what the apostle John tells us in his first letter, "Do not love the world of anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2: 15, 16).

matter of two sinners living together. There will always be a certain amount of misunderstanding and conflict.

The role of Fathers

In that culture the father's was responsible to arrange the marriages of their daughters. Some fathers were determined to keep their daughters single for the sake of the gospel. Yet Paul says that in verse 36, that it would not be a sin to find men for their daughters. It should be the daughter's choice whether or not they stay single.

Widows

To the widows Paul says that if they feel a calling to remain single they will find their happiness there. Yet if they do not have that calling, they are free to marry another believer. Paul states that there is nothing wrong with being married but one must remember that it is not easy.

We must all realize that we too live in a time where we have many that think that marriage is unnecessary, that we are free to have sexual relations outside of marriage, that we can marry anyone even if they don't believe. Paul gives these instructions so that we too, can deal with these problems in our daily life. We must look to God for all the answers and realize that he is in total control.

~ RACHEL VANDERLINDEN

The Contender

it's on the web!!

<http://frca.org.au/contender/>

including both recent and back issues of the contender available in pdf form aswell as other useful links and information.

from front page

A quick look at the back of the first Contender 2003 shows that there has been a big change in the editorial committee in the course of the past 12 months. The latest arrival is Arend Witten. We welcome him and we say farewell to Lindsay. Thank you, Lindsay, for your enthusiasm and commitment to Contender during your time as editor.

Although this change puts some pressure on the "new kids on the block", it means there will inevitably be changes in the magazine. These changes will, hopefully, only serve to maintain or improve the quality of your Contender.

We hope that God will bless our efforts this year. We hope that 2004 will prove to be a year in which apathy is abolished and passion is present. We hope this year that you won't find an excuse to sleep on the job.

~ ERIC DEKKER

On the other hand omnipotent and omnipresent

God is omnipotent and omnipresent. This is undoubtedly true.

If He is "all powerful", why does He need a "host of angels", an "army"?

(Gen 32:1, 2)

If He is "everywhere present", why does He need angels to be messengers?

(Luke 1:26)

What do you think? SHORT responses (max 150 words) to be emailed to eric.dekker@frsa.asn.au

The title above this part in the New King James (7:17-24) is "Live as you are called". The Corinthians are looking back on their past and frowning. They have the 'if only' syndrome. They say "if only I did this" or "if only I hadn't done that". Some of the church members wanted to serve the Lord but they regretted the fact that they had been married and now they don't see themselves as truly spiritual. Married Christians hated the day that they decided to marry and wondered if they should divorce. Others were regretting the fact that they had or had not been circumcised. Those who had been circumcised believed now that they were saved and have broken with Judaism; their circumcision was now a source of embarrassment to them. Those who have not been circumcised were regretting the absence of it, wondering if special blessings are bestowed only on those who are circumcised.

Others were battling with slaves and their level within the community. They did not see how slaves could serve the Lord. They reasoned that since slaves can hardly control their own lives, how can they have time and money to serve the Lord? Paul tells us to be content. Paul emphasizes this by using three headings: 'God's sovereignty', 'what really matters', and 'our circumstances with God'.

God's Sovereignty

In verse 7:17&18, Paul says "But as God has distributed to each one, so let him walk". God knows what the best is for His people. In this way we must realize that everything is the way it is because God is in control. He knows what is best for His children. The sovereignty of God is a great mystery and our minds are very limited. We cannot understand everything but we must trust that it is providential and rest in the fact that God is in control and He will never let His children fall away.

What really matters?

In verse 19 of chapter 7 we read: "But keeping the commandments of God is what matters." God's blessings rest on those who obey him, whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised, slave or free. The only thing that matters is the fact that we must obey Him, for He gave us

the circumstances that we are in, in order to obey Him.

In our circumstances with God

In verse 24 Paul wraps up his discussion with the words, "Let each one remain with God in that calling in which he was called." The very same God who gives us difficult situations is there in the midst of them to help us bear them. After giving the burden, our loving Father helps us shoulder it. Whatever God's purposes are, they are good and right.

In the earlier part of this chapter, Paul speaks about the people who are already married, yet now he deals with those who are still single (1 Corinthians 7: 25-40). In these last verses Paul talks about three different groups of people: virgins, fathers (who were responsible for arranging marriages), and widows.

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but we must trust that it is
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The unmarried

Paul tells those who are virgins and who are contemplating marriage, to think about the following things before they do so. One of the things is whether there is any crisis that is occurring in their times that will put an unnecessary strain upon the marriage. With this in mind he urges those who are unmarried not to marry in such times. For example, there was a lot of persecution in those times; to be married and have your family torn apart is not good.

Another care is the trouble in life. People are called to remember the fact that marriage is one of God's most precious gifts, but it is not easy. Being married means that you must sacrifice things for another person. Marriage is still a

Prayer Colossians 4

The apostle proceeds from the previous chapter concluding with the relations in the church between masters and slaves. The direction of this verse points to the basis of the commandments - "love your neighbour as yourself." The masters were to treat their servants with justice and kindness knowing that they were accountable to God. In this way they were to deal with their servant as they expected God should deal with them. For through their (servants) freedom in Christ it made it impossible that they should be treated as mere possessions.

After having finished admonishing the respective groups in Colossian society, Paul exhorts the Christian community to "continue earnestly in prayer." It is not for nothing that Paul puts this aspect first, for the catechism calls prayer the chief part of our thankfulness to God. Paul also exhorts the congregation to continue earnestly, that is, in perseverance. This is illustrated in Christ's parable about the widow in Luke chapter 18 where the widow continually cried out to the judge for justice who finally gave in to her persistence. Christ then spoke this parable Luke says "to the end, that man ought always to pray, and not to faint." In connection with this the Lord says "when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on earth?" Although this does not mean there won't be any believers on Christ's return this faith, however, provoked by unceasing prayer, will not be characteristic of all. God teaches us to 'cry' with earnestness, and we must wrestle with him day and night, for God's praying people are told to give him no rest till he establishes (Isaiah 62: 6,7).

Furthermore Paul is aware of dangers that threaten our prayers, especially the effect of customs. Sometimes we ask ourselves if we pray too often but the danger does not lie in this, for we must always pray. Moreover the danger is rather that we pray in a slack manner, the fact that we are not in it with our whole heart. Therefore we must not pray less but, "in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Also we must be vigilant in our prayers, for Satan is continually threatening the prayers of the church. He knows

that when we no longer pray truly, we no longer pray without ceasing and therefore we become an easy target for him. True prayer is also accompanied by thanksgiving, for is prayer not also an expression of gratitude and thankfulness? Whoever is not grateful cannot pray, but a thankful person is a praying person. However, prayer must also be for our neighbour, for Paul encourages the church to pray for him and his fellow missionaries that the gospel could go throughout the world in peace. Paul believed that the prayers of the church could help him, even in his chains. Do we believe that prayer can achieve anything, beyond peace of mind? But Christ says "he who asks, receives" and James tells us that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:16) An example of this is found in Elijah's life for he "prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not rain on the land for 3 years and 6 months, and he prayed again and the heavens gave rain and the earth produced its fruit." (James 5:17f)

**'Whoever is not grateful cannot
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praying person.'**

Paul goes on to exhort the Colossians on their daily walk of life. This is in direct connection with Lord's Day 32 about our thankfulness - how we show our faith by our works toward God and the neighbour and thus, "that by our godly walk of life we may win our neighbours for Christ." In line with this idea, Paul gives us a few basic rules. The first is to watch our conduct. This means to walk in the wisdom of the gospel by which a Christian knows what to do in each different circumstance.

In connection with this wise conduct, it follows that our speech must be mild but firm. It cannot mean waffle but speech seasoned with the salt of God's Word so that we may know how

to answer any person, godly or ungodly. However, this does not mean we have to answer every one, but there is a time to speak and a time to keep silent (Ecc 3:7b). This is illustrated again in the Proverbs (26:4-5), "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes." By putting these verses together it shows that no proverb is intended to cover every possible situation. Although this part of scripture may seem to contradict, wise men need to be directed how to deal with fools. In some cases a wise man will not answer a fool because otherwise he may be like them and then the Word of God may be blasphemed. In other situations a wise man will use his wisdom to beat the fool at his own game so that he may turn from his folly. If the fool has reason to think that you are silent because of weakness give him an answer "lest he be wise in his own eyes" and boast of a victory. Thus we have need of wisdom and grace to give proper answers to every man, as Paul says in his letter to Timothy, "that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work".

However, every one should serve the Lord with their whole heart, mind and soul. However, many having made the confession and gained a standing among Christians were also a target of Satan. In fact, later on, in his letter to Timothy, Paul writes, "for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." For this reason Paul has exhorted the Christians in Colossi and also us today "to continue earnestly in prayer being vigilant in it with thanksgiving."

Therefore it is fitting to conclude with the words of Psalm 34:15-18, "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit... The Lord redeems the soul of his servants, and none of those who trust in him shall be condemned."

~ JULIAN SLOBE

'We have need of wisdom and grace to give proper answers to every man'

This letter of Paul to the Colossians was to be delivered by Tychicus and Onesimus to the churches in Colossi. Paul refers to Tychicus as a faithful minister which renders him worthy of our esteem. He was willing to hear from them as much as the Colossians could be to hear about him. It is a comfort to have mutual concern for fellow Christians in our communion of saints with in our body of churches. Concerning Onesimus, he was one that Paul had converted while he was still in chains, yet through the blood of Christ Paul is able to call him a faithful and beloved brother. Then Paul continues to give the greetings of a fellow missionary and esteemed people. All, no matter what position, whether prisoner or free, missionary or doctor, are called fellow co-workers. Not everyone has to be a minister or a missionary to be a blessing in God's kingdom.

West Kelmscott Easter Congress!

By request from West Albany, West Kelmscott will be organising the Easter congress here in the Perth metro area. This will be the first congress since September 2002 to be held in Perth. We hope to see you all there. Watch this space for further details.

The Congress Committee;
Ashley Diek, Frank Janssen, Jeanette Janssen,
Tim Kramer and Alyce Sibum

1 Corinthians 7:10-40 an introduction

The Christians in Corinth at this time were struggling with the sin of sexual immorality. They had many questions that needed to be answered. They were wondering what they should do in this regard; should they ignore it, or should they throw sexual purity out the window since it is causing a lot of problems? Some also thought that if you can't beat it why not join it. Others thought that they should avoid sex altogether for being single in life is better. These people believed that those who are already married should either refrain from sex altogether, or become divorced.

But Paul said that a single life had certain advantages to God's service and that Christians may do this if they have a special calling from God or a special gift (Matthew 19:11&12). Paul also says to those who believe in abstaining from sex, that the main purpose for marriage is to serve as an outlet for passion, and sex in the marriage leads people away from immorality. The only reason for abstaining from sex within marriage is if the couple agrees on this for a short time for spiritual purposes.

'God wants a marriage to be based out of true love for God and unity in God...'

Christian Couples

In verse 12, when Paul says "Not I but the Lord", he is responding to the situation in Corinth by repeating the teachings of divorce that Jesus had spoken during His ministry. Jesus said that God institutes marriage. It is sacred and permanent and Christians should not seek for a divorce, unless adultery occurs and even then, it is not a necessity. Paul states that Christian couples must stay married. He says to those who are already divorced: stay single or be reconciled to your former husband.

Mixed Marriages

Scriptures say that we are to marry only in the Lord. Then a scenario is put to us. If two unbelievers were to marry and one of them comes to faith what happens then. If the unbeliever is content to stay married then that is how it should stay. Yet if the unbeliever calls for a divorce and fighting occurs as a result of staying married, then God calls for peace (Chapter 7:15): this marriage should not continue. The believer does not know whether God will lead the unbeliever to repentance, so it is not good to stay married and fight all the time.

'We must look to God for all the answers and realize that he is in total control.'

This chapter does not mean that a marriage is a success if the couples are able to stay married, but God wants a marriage to be based out of true love for God and unity in God, and not out of a determination to stay married.

Many scholars believe that verse 15 means that the believer is free to marry again as it states, "A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases." But this means that they are not responsible for the divorce.

Some also state that these verses are just Paul's opinion. They interpret verse 12 to say that it is not inspired. Yet here, Paul is dealing with a matter that the Lord has not specifically dealt with in scripture. Paul's writings are inspired by God.

We must look at marriage in the following way. If God gives the gift of singleness to us, let's use it for His glory. If He wants us to marry, let us use marriage for His glory. We shall not reject sex but demonstrate to the world the happiness that comes when it is used in the way God intended.