



# The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

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## SETTLING IN SODOM

*By Wayne Camp*

**TEXT: Genesis 13:10-13** *And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. (11) Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. (12) Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. (13) But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.*

**2 Peter 2:7-8** *And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (8) (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)*

### INTRODUCTION

It has always been my policy to keep politics out of the things that I write in this paper. This is not going to be a political article. But, it will necessarily point to some political matters that are taking place in this country that show the moral direction in which our nation is headed. Old Testament prophets rebuked the sins of the nation's leaders.

A few years ago President Ronald Reagan nominated Judge Robert Bork for the Supreme Court of the United States. Liberals in the U.S. Senate, including Joe Biden and Ted Kennedy led a fierce opposition battle against the approval of Judge Bork. If I remember correctly

the opposition was so fierce that the nomination of Judge Bork was withdrawn.

Judge Bork wrote a book called *Slouching Toward Sodom*. I must confess that I have never read the book but I read reviews of it and looking at where we are today I would have to say it was almost prophetic. I have called this article **Settling In Sodom**. We are no longer slouching toward Sodom as a nation we have settled in Sodom. Little by little this nation has deteriorated morally to the point that just recently our Congress voted to repeal the Don't Ask Don't Tell restriction put on the military which kept sodomites from serving openly in the military. There was one time when it was totally illegal for such people to serve. Then in the Clinton years we got Don't Ask Don't Tell instituted. Now that limitation has been repealed. Morally our nation and many of our so-called conservative politicians are approving of sodomites openly serving in the military.

I fear we are headed for judgment that will surpass anything that has ever happened to this nation. It could surpass the plagues that God brought on Egypt. It could surpass the plague of AIDS which God has brought on our nation. Sodomy was the sin for which Sodom, Gomorrah and the other cities of the plains around them were destroyed. This declension did not occur suddenly. Just as Lot's declension did not occur suddenly; it progressed step-by-step.

### LOT LOOKED TOWARD SODOM

Satan often uses the lust of the eye to lead men into his way. **Genesis 13:10** *And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of*

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**Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.**

Lot liked what he saw in the Jordan Valley. It reminds me of the temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden. **Genesis 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and**

**gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.** The forbidden fruit was pleasant to the eye of the tempted woman. The fertile, productive Jordan Valley was pleasant to the eyes of Lot.

When the descendents of godly Seth saw the beautiful women descended from Cain they were tempted to intermarry with them. This led to terrible wickedness in the Earth. **Genesis 6:2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.**

**1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.** The sin of Achan was the result of the lust of his eyes. **Joshua 7:21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.** Israel could not stand before their enemies and were forced to flee. The men of Ai killed 36 men of Israel. When Joshua cried out to God the Lord revealed to him that someone had violated his commandment. God commanded them not to take any spoils of war. But Achan lusted and brought judgment upon his brethren and finally up on his own house. **Joshua 7:24-25 And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. (25) And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.**

Lot lusted for the fertile plains in which Sodom and the other cities were located. But Lot did not merely look toward Sodom he pitched his tent toward Sodom. **Genesis 13:12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.** He did this in spite of the fact that the men of Sodom were

exceedingly wicked. **Genesis 13:13** *But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.*

### THE EXCEEDING WICKEDNESS OF THE MEN OF SODOM

I am a little uncomfortable when I deal with such a subject for I do not want to be crude nor do I want to shock your sensibilities. If I were to describe some of the sexual habits of the sodomites in our land it would be too vulgar for our Christian sensibilities.

In the light of all that is being reported in the media and the care that is taken by the liberal media to be sure to not insult homosexuals or make them feel uncomfortable, I think it is good for us to remind ourselves again of what **God** says about homosexuals and homosexuality. This is not what Wayne Camp says; it is what **God** says. I believe emphatically that every word of God is pure and inspired by the Holy Spirit. When I show what the Scriptures say on the subject at hand, I will be showing what God says on this matter.

Moses declared that the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before God exceedingly. What was their chief wickedness? They were homosexuals, or as called in God's word, **sodomites**.

When two Angels, appearing as men, came to Lot to take him out of the wicked city of Sodom the men of Sodom made known their wicked intentions toward these two that they thought were men. **Genesis 19:4-9** *But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: (5) And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. (6) And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, (7) And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. (8) Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the*

*shadow of my roof. (9) And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door.* Even after the Angels smote the men with blindness they still tried to carry out their evil intentions of sodomizing the two men.

Some erroneously argue that the sin of Sodom was in not showing hospitality to these two men. But why would Lot offer his two virgin daughters to these men and their desire to send it to get acquainted with the men. We need to consider the word **know** to see what it implies in this particular passage. These men did not simply want to meet and become acquainted with these angels whom they thought to be mere men. They wanted to know them in a homosexual manner. They wanted to sodomize them. This is clear from the Scriptures that refer back to this incident. Consider the seventh verse of the book of Jude. **Jude 1:7** *Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. This is further clarified in the book of Romans. Romans 1:26-27* *For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: (27) And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.* A similar event occurred in Gibeah in the days when judges ruled Israel. **Judges 19:22-24** *Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him. (23) And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is*

**come into mine house, do not this folly. (24) Behold, here is my daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing.**

Three expressions in this last passage should be noted to see how God looks up on sodomy. The man said to the men of Gibeah, “**do not so wickedly.**” Commenting on this expression John Gill wrote, “It is plain he understood them in such sense, that they meant not bare knowledge of the man, as who he was, etc. but to commit wickedness the most abominable; so great, that it cannot be well said how great it is.”

The second expression the man used to describe the utter wickedness of sodomy was, “**do not this folly.**” Of this expression Gill wrote of the crime of sodomy, “The nature of the crime, which was folly, stupidity, and what was abominable to the last degree.”

The third expression the man used to describe the awfulness of sodomy was, “**Unto this man do not so vile a thing.**” This referred, according to Gill, “to commit the unnatural sin.”

Before moving to the next point let me emphasize that the sin of sodomy is first and foremost a sin against God. This is clear from the statement of Moses in the following verse. **Genesis 13:13 But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.** It is not uncommon for sodomites to claim that they are the way they are because God made them that way. Liberals who support their wicked lifestyle sometimes make the same claim. That is completely out of harmony with what Moses says in verse 13 above. Sodomites dishonor their own bodies between themselves. Their affection for one another is a vile affection. There sodomy is not because God made them that way but because of the lusts of their own hearts. Paul makes that very clear. **Romans 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves. Romans 1:26 For this**

**cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.**

### LOT HAD SETTLED IN SODOM

Lot had settled down in Sodom. He did not leave even when he saw the utter wickedness of the men of Sodom. **2 Peter 2:7-8 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (8) (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;).** According to Strong the word translated **dwelling** in this verse means to *settle down* in a place, that is, *reside*: - dwell among.

Lot lost his testimony in Sodom. He had no influence even with his own family. When the Angels told him to get his children so that they could take them out also, his sons-in-law scorned his words. **Genesis 19:14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.** When Sodom was destroyed along with the other cities in the plains Lot had at least two daughters who were destroyed with the wicked people of Sodom. I say at least two daughters. We do not know how many daughters he had who were already married but we do know that he tried to persuade his sons-in-law to come to his home so that they could leave with him.

Even after the threats and wrath of the men of Sodom were manifest toward Lot he lingered in Sodom until the Angels took him, his wife and his two unmarried daughters by the hands and took them out of the city. **Genesis 19:16 And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.**

### OUR PRESIDENT AND OUR CONGRESS HAVE SETTLED FOR SODOMY

The days of *slouching toward Sodom* are

over. We have settled in Sodom. I know that many people in the United States are opposed to this. I predict that the day will come when God will severely judge this nation or, we will have to repent of electing leaders who have led us in this degeneration and collapse of morals that our nation once held.

## THE AGGRESSIVE NATURE OF SODOMITES

I will now repeat some Scriptures that I have already used. I want the reader to see that when sodomites openly identify themselves and are accepted as people who just live an alternate lifestyle they become very aggressive. They have been this way in history and they will be again.

Consider the aggressiveness of the wicked men of Sodom who openly engage in sodomy. **Genesis 19:9** *And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door. Genesis 19:11* *And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.* Notice that when Lot pleaded with them to not do this wicked thing against the men that were in his house, they threatened to even treat Lot worse than they were going to treat the others. As I pointed out earlier, even after the angels smote the men of Sodom with blindness they continued to try to knock down his door and rape him and the Angels. There is little wonder that God had already determined to destroy this wicked city and the other cities of the plain that were apparently engaged in open sodomy also.

Note also the aggressiveness of the homosexuals of Gibeah. **Judges 19:22** *Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him. Jdg 19:25* *But the men would not hearken to him....* When they did not prevail

they took the man's concubine ravished her all night so that she died the next morning before she could reach home. The man took his concubine cut her into 12 pieces and sent those 12 pieces to the 12 tribes of Israel as a warning of the dangers of sodomites.

We have demonstrated from Scripture the extreme arrogance and sinful persistence and doggedness of the homosexual crowd. When men and women live in defiance of God's word they tend to be rather impudent. If they do not care for the laws of God they will certainly disdain the laws of society. For any reading this who might be tempted to say sodomy was outlawed in the Old Testament but with the coming of Christ that was changed. I would remind you that we have used Scriptures from both the Old and New Testaments in this article that condemned sodomy in strong terms. This defiance toward God's word has been seen recently in the unlawful "marriages" that have been taking place in several places in our nation.

Ezekiel shows that the homosexuals are guilty of a multitude of sins in their conduct. **Ezekiel 16:49-50** *Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50* *And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.*

A society that is rampant with homosexuality is usually rife with other crimes also. A Christian Network says of homosexuals "They paint themselves as peaceful, innocent, and gay. Yet a Washington newspaper reported that 80 percent of gays that were court-martialed by the U. S. Army for sexual misconduct the past four years had engaged in assaults against their victims. This was not consensual sex; it was sex after assault. Nearly half have been involved in child molestation.

It may shock you to know that "The top six U. S. male serial killers were all homosexuals," including John Wayne Gacy and Jeffrey Dahmer. I have heard and read that the soldier who recently leaked thousands of classified documents is a homosexual.

## GOD'S COMMANDS TO ISRAEL CONCERNING HOMOSEXUALS

Israel was forbidden to harbor homosexuals among their population. **Deuteronomy 23:17-18** *There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel. 18 Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God.* The dog referred to in this passage is a homosexual who sold his body to other men and performed homosexual acts for money. It has nothing to do with that fine Irish Setter that one may raise and sell. The price of a dog is the hire of a homosexual who prostitutes his body to satisfy the vile lusts of other men or her body for the loathsome affections of other women.

The lifestyle of homosexuals is an abomination before God. They are repugnant to his holy nature. **1 Kings 14:24** *And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. Leviticus 18:22* *Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. Leviticus 20:13* *If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.* The word **abomination** in these verses refers to something that is utterly disgusting. It is something that is to be abhorred.

Such conduct is extremely hateful in God's sight. All sin is displeasing and offensive to God but the sex acts of the homosexual are detested by him.

In keeping with God's holy commandments, good King Asa did the right thing when he expelled the homosexuals out of the land of Israel. **1 Kings 15:12** *And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.*

Asa's son, Jehoshaphat, also removed some homosexuals out of the land whom Asa had missed. These godly kings were zealous to obey God and would not, therefore, tolerate such wicked and abominable people to live in

the land. **1 Kings 22:46** *And the remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land.* These were not simply the acts of some homophobic king. Asa and Jehoshaphat were obeying the holy God whom he served when he drove the sodomites out of the land of Israel.

When Josiah became king he went further than had his predecessors. Homosexuals were again in the land. He broke down the houses belonging to homosexuals. **2 Kings 23:7** *And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove.* Yes, you read that correctly! These wicked people had built themselves houses close to the house of the Lord. Not only did Josiah drive them from the land; he destroyed the houses in which they lived. And, he did it with the approval of God.

Paul declares that a homosexual cannot inherit the kingdom of God. **1 Corinthians 6:9** *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.* It is clear from Scripture that nothing that defiles will be allowed in that holy place. **Revelation 22:15** *For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

Those who engage in homosexual practices defile themselves. **1 Timothy 1:9-10** *Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.*

Again, let me point out that the reigning sin in Sodom and Gomorrah was homosexuality. **Genesis 19:5-7** *And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out*

*unto us, that we may know them. 6 And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, 7 And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.* As with any society that deteriorates to the low degree of Sodom and the cities of that area, these cities were rife with all kinds of immorality and crime. They would not hesitate to try to break down Lot's door and take the men (angels) out and rape them.

### HOMOSEXUALITY AN ABOMINATION BEFORE GOD

We have already seen from Scripture that homosexuality is an abomination before God. The homosexual act is declared to be an abomination. ***Leviticus 18:22 Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.*** When something is declared to be abominable before God it is extremely hateful and repugnant to him.

Because of his holy abhorrence of this sin, God commanded that those who committed this abominable act were to be put to death under the Law of Moses. ***Leviticus 20:13 If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.***

In still another place in the word of God it is declared that homosexuality is an abomination and makes it clear that this abomination came from paganism; in no way can it be charged against God. ***1 Kings 14:24 And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.*** In 1890 Charles Jenkins published a book called ***Baptist Doctrines*** in which he quoted G. D. B. Pepper who stated, "Whatever is condemned by truth is condemned by the God of truth." You cannot separate the God of truth from the written word of truth—the Bible. ***John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*** The word of God comes from the mouth of God and God cannot lie. ***Matthew 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the***

***mouth of God. Hebrews 6:18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.*** When the Bible declares that homosexuality is an abomination before God you can be assured that God considers homosexuality an abomination. Since God's word is forever settled in heaven, we can be certain that homosexuality is as much an abomination before God **now** as it was when the Old and New Testaments were written. ***Psalm 119:89 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.***

## BIBLE CONFERENCE CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

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Saturday Morning Service 9:30 AM  
Lunch In the Fellowship Hall  
Dinner: Fellowship Hall 5:00 PM  
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Sunday Morning Service 9:30 AM  
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Sunday Evening Service 5:00 PM  
Dinner in Fellowship Hall After Service

#### SPEAKERS

Laurence Justice, Steve Fulton,  
Steve Raines, Dan Cozart,  
and Larry Windham

Pastor: Bill Lee  
Phone: 662-226-2715



## Thailand Missions Report

**“The churches of Asia salute you...” I Corinthians 16:19**

*“To God be the glory, Great things He hath done”!*

**“As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country”, Proverbs 25:25.** Following a recent trip to Thailand I am able to bring you “good news from a far country”. I am able to report to you from first hand observation that things are well in the Lord’s work in Thailand. There is still the opposition of Satan as he relentlessly seeks to tear down what we have built up, but he shall not prevail.

On this trip, which was from January 3-18, I found the churches there, to the best of their present ability, earnestly contending for the faith. It is true among the churches of northern Thailand, even as it was among the elders assembled at Ephesus: **“Also among your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”, Acts 20:30.**

It is a sad thing to report, but what Paul predicted would happen among those elders he spoke to in Acts 20 has happened also in the churches of Thailand. One particular pastor has decided to deny the faith he once seemed to embrace and has gone among the other churches seeking to persuade them to follow him and his false doctrine. He has even gone so far as to encourage other pastors and students to stop attending the Bible school we have established. He is promoting the idea that he will start his own school and teach doctrine which is totally contrary to what Bro. Camp and others teach in our school.

But here is the “good news” in this matter. The other pastors and churches have resisted his relentless appeals and are standing firm in the faith. They have told him repeatedly of their intentions to continue in the true doctrine they have learned and have no intentions of departing from the faith. But as always, and seemingly everywhere, the opposition to the Lord’s work continues, from both within and without. Please remember these pastors and churches in Thailand in your prayers. They are young in the faith but are standing firm against multiplied opposition.

Upon arriving in Thailand it was good to see Bro. Anond, Bro. Camp and Ruth. My arrival coincided with the annual break for New Years in the schedule of the school. Bro. Paul Brown and Susan had returned home following their time there in the first term of the school year. Bro. Camp was awaiting the arrival of Bro. Billy Holliday and Pat to join him and Ruth for the second term of school. During this time Bro. Camp and I made an inspection of the children’s center and school building, noting some changes and repairs which needed to be made. We also made some changes in the personnel at the children’s center. And again I can bring “good news from a far country in reporting that the children are doing well. They are happy, healthy and very much appreciative of all that is being done for them.

A few days after my arrival in Thailand, Dr. Bryan Darling arrived and we spent the following days going from village to village tending to the medical needs of the people. One day we went to the northern most city of Mai Sai and met with about fifty people from Burma. These are members and pastors of churches in Burma that have been established as a result of the Lord’s work in Thailand. It was such a blessing to meet with these saints once again and to hear of their stand for truth in that oppressive communist controlled country. More “good news from a far country”!

During all of this time the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached in many places. I had the opportunity to preach in several of the churches while I was in Thailand. Some of these occasions were regular church services and some were special “New Year” services. On two of these opportunities I preached outdoors and at night. Special lighting was rigged so that I had at least a single light bulb to read by. The attendance and the attention at these services were excellent as many of the people had pencils and paper to take notes of what was being preached. Another night services were held in a church building where there was no electricity. The members lined each side of the



building, as well as the table used for a pulpit, with candles which burned during the service. This was really a pretty sight. Again, the attendance and the attention during the service were very good.

So the Lord's work in Thailand continues. His blessings and providence are evident in so many places and ways. Churches continue in the faith and are showing more and more signs of spiritual growth and maturity. There remain many villages we have not yet reached, but still the good news of Jesus Christ continues to spread through the jungles and mountains of northern Thailand.

We sincerely thank each church and each individual who has joined with us in this work. Please continue to pray for this work and thank God that He allows us by His grace to serve Him. And I would also ask you to pray for Bro Camp and Bro. Holladay as they continue teaching in the school for the remainder of this school term.



## THE BRUISED REED AND THE FLICKERING CANDLE

*By John MacDuff*

**"Comfort, comfort My people!" says your God. Isaiah 40:1**

**"A bruised reed he will not break, and a flickering candle he will not snuff out!" Isaiah 42:3**

No verse in this beautiful chapter, nor in this "Book of Comfort," is more comforting than this. God has His *strong* ones in His Church — His *oaks* of Bashan and *cedars* of Lebanon; noble forest trees, spreading far and wide their branches of faith and love and holiness — those who are deeply rooted in the truth, able to wrestle with fierce *tempests* of unbelief, and to grapple with *temptations* in their sterner forms.

But He has His *weaklings* and His *saplings* also — those that require to be tenderly shielded from the blast, and who are liable, from constitutional temperament, to become the prey of doubts and fears, to which the others are total strangers. *Sensitive* in times of trial, *irresolute* in times of difficulty and danger, *unstable* in times of severe temptation; or it may be in perpetual disquietude and alarm about their spiritual safety. To such, the loving ways and dealings of the Savior are thus unfolded, "A *bruised reed* shall He not break, and the *flickering candle* shall He not snuff out." Let us proceed to note the beauty and significance of the twofold figure.

**(1.) The bruised reed.** The reed, or "calamus," is a plant with hollow stem, which grew principally by the side of lakes or rivers. Those who have been in Palestine are familiar with it in the tangled thickets which still line the shores of the ancient lake Gennesaret, or, above all, in the dense thicket fringing the banks of the Jordan. The plant might well be taken as an *emblem of whatever was weak, fragile, brittle*. The foot of the wild beast which made its lair in the jungle — trampled it to pieces. Its slender stalk bent or snapped under the weight of the *bird* that sought to make it a perch. The

wind and hail-storm shivered its delicate tubes, or laid them prostrate on the ground.

"A reed shaken by the wind," was the metaphor employed by One, whose eyes, in haunts most loved and frequented by Him — had oftentimes gazed on this significant *emblem of human weakness and instability*.

Once broken, it was rendered of no use. Other stems which had been bent by the hurricane might, by careful nursing and tending, be recovered; but the reed, once shattered, became worthless. In a preceding chapter (Isaiah 36:6) it is thus spoken of as an emblem of tottering, fragile Egypt, "Lo you trust in the staff of this broken reed — on Egypt, whereon, if a man leans — it will go into his hand and pierce it!"

Some have considered that a reference is made, in the present passage, to the reeds which the shepherds of old used in their rustic *pipes* on the hills of Canaan. One of these reeds — bruised, split, or broken, would make the whole instrument discordant. We may imagine David playing on such an instrument in the valleys of Bethlehem, before he got his golden harp on Mount Zion. He would probably fashion that mountain-pipe with his own hands — plucking the reeds from some watercourse among the hills of Judah as he was watching his father's sheep, and using it as an accompaniment to "the Lord's song." But if one of the tubes had received an injury, what would he do? He would never think of *repairing* it; but taking the instrument to pieces, he would throw the mutilated and bruised reed away, and meander down to the ample reed-forest in the valley, to insert a *new* one.

'Not such' says Christ, 'are my dealings with any of my people, who may be broken with convictions of sin, and wounded in conscience — I will not break the bruised reed!' Or rather, as that *negative assertion* is the Hebrew way of conveying a *strong affirmative* — it is equivalent to saying, that He will *bind up* the broken heart, that He will *cement* the splintered stem of the hanging bulrush, endowing it with new life and strength and vigor, causing it to "spring up among the grass, as willows by the watercourses" — that He will pardon, pity, comfort, relieve!

Look at that same sweet Psalmist of Israel: who was more a "bruised reed" than he? God had inspired his soul — made it a many-stringed instrument in discoursing His praise; but now it lies a *broken mutilated thing*, with the stain of crimson guilt upon it — tuneless and silent. "I kept silence," says he, "my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Does God desert him? does He cast the reed away, and seek to replace the void by another, worthier and better? Does He mock the cry of penitential sorrow, as through anguished tears that stricken one thus implored forgiveness, "Have mercy upon me, O God — according to Your loving-kindness! According to the multitude of Your tender mercy — blot out my transgression!"

No! Hear him detail his own experience, "I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid; I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord — and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." And then he takes up the retuned instrument, and sings for the encouragement of others, "For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found."

In the case of some *aromatic plants* — it is when *bruised* they give forth the sweetest fragrance. So, it is often the soul, crushed with a sense of sin — which sends forth the sweetest aroma of humility, gratitude, and love. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

**(2.) The flickering candle.** But, not only is it predicted of this coming Savior, that "the bruised reed He shall not break," it is added, "The wick (flickering candle) he will not snuff out." We may be warranted perhaps in taking this second metaphor to apply, not so much to those who are haunted with the remembrance of any special or presumptuous sin — as to those who gradually, perhaps almost imperceptibly, have suffered *declension in spiritual things* — who are mourning the general *languor* of their spiritual life, the deterioration or decay of their Christian graces. They hear others spoken of as being "strong in *faith*" — but their faith is not entitled to the name. They hear

of others spoken of as ardent in *love* — but they cannot mock so noble and heavenly a grace by identifying it with their own. They read, in the case of others, of glowing ecstasies and *holy experiences* — but they are strangers to all such. If they have the *retrospect* of better times — *now* at all events, they can only tell of *declension* and *backsliding*. If they can revert to hallowed hours, which still linger, like a strain of far off music, in their *memories* — these have now only left behind them an aching void and gloomy silence.

Like *Samson* they go forth — but it is with shorn locks, weak and powerless. Like the children of Israel once "carrying bows" — they have now "turned faint in the day of battle." Once under the palm-groves of Elim, and drinking its refreshing wells — they are now dwelling in the *dark tents of Kedar*. The joy of their piety is departed; and if they were asked for some image to describe their feelings, they would point to the flickering candle, smouldering and no more — "the glimmering wick of faith," as Jerome calls it — the reeking smoke already rising, as if premonitory of its entire extinction.

Such a *flickering candle* was the once hero-hearted Prophet Elijah, seated amid the crude rocks of Horeb; away from duty — morbid, sullen, panic-stricken — forgetful of the encouragements of mount Carmel and the miracles of brook Cherith — indulging in the ungrateful soliloquy, "It is enough, take away my life!" God has forgotten me! Does the Great Being he thus unworthily distrusted, accept him at his word? Does He *crush* the feeble spark, or leave the desert whirlwind to blow out the flickering, expiring flame? No! "What are you doing here, Elijah?" "Arise; go anoint Jehu, go anoint Hazael; go back to duty; I will yet make you a burning and a shining light in Israel."

Such a *flickering candle* (to take a New Testament example), was the cowardly Apostle Peter, as he is seen skulking with uneasy step, in a momentous hour, within the vestibule of the high-priest's palace. Peter, indeed, was an illustration of the bruised reed and flickering candle in one. In his case, too, it was not the *gradual* wasting and expiring of the flame — but rather its threatened swift extinction — about to be quenched in sudden darkness. It is a terrible

collapse of loud profession and parade of courage! He has deserted his Master in the hour He most needed his sympathy and presence and loyal fidelity. The proud vessel of *yesterday*, bounding with full sail under favoring breezes — lies *today*, seemingly an abandoned, dismantled hulk on the rocks! But is that vessel hopelessly to be broken up, and its fragments scattered over the trough of the ocean? Is there no *tide of love* that will once more set it floating on the waters? Is that *flickering candle* to burn itself out in darkness and despair? Has the *vital spark* really fled and left nothing save the sickening *fumes* — the memories of apostasy, the breach of plighted faith and sworn discipleship — with the deep aggravation of oaths and curses? Are there no words of forgiving tenderness that are yet to fan the "*flickering candle*" into its old flame, transform weakness — into strength; cowardice — into heroic devotion?

Yes! "Go your way, tell His disciples — *and Peter*," was the message of personal kindness and mercy. 'Go and tell the most traitorous of these disciples — the candle that has burnt most feebly, that I am to come again and fan it into deathless consecration!' And so it was.

When the *faithless disciple* and the *faithful Master* confronted one another, face to face, at the Lake of Tiberias, and when the fire of coals was kindled on the shore (fit emblem of the better rekindling of apparently smothered and extinguished life and love), see how the *tenderest of rebukes* ever uttered to the erring — brought tears to the eye — and burning confessions, thrice repeated, to the lip. The slumbering ashes of an unquenched and unquenchable devotion awoke. The flickering candle burst into a fervent flame; and from the path of duty and of suffering which he manfully trod in response to the call "Follow Me," there was, from that day onwards, no deflection!

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever; and for all who feel, in their own case, the accuracy of the figure "flickering candle," He has words of encouragement and heart-cheer. Listen to the voice which addressed *Peter* by the lake-side of Gennesaret, as it was heard, yet a few years later, from the Throne of Glory, admonishing

one of the Asiatic churches and its individual members.

That *church* had become lukewarm, backsliding, lethargic, apostate. It is described, not by His inspired servant — but by His own lips of Omniscience — (seen by Him who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and "whose eyes are as a flame of fire") — as having "a name that you live and are dead" (Revelation 3:1). What is His verdict and deliverance on those thus *trembling on the verge* of a confirmed apostasy — *apparently dead* while they live? Is it, 'Bury the dead out of my sight! Cast the bruised reed away! Quench and extinguish that flickering candle, which is only rising like defiled incense from my holy altar, and polluting my holy courts!' No! "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, which are ready to die" (verse 2).

BACKSLIDER! whatever may have been the cause of present alienation from the "God of your life" — do not surrender yourself to an unwarranted despondency. The *cry of the truant wanderer* from the fold, as it mourns its estrangement and longs for return — will not be unheard by the Shepherd of souls. The wail of the disconsolate spouse, rising as it does from the depths of a yet devoted heart, will not fail to reach the ear of the loved and lost One she seeks: "Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon? For why should I be as one who turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?" (Song of Solomon 1:7).

No, He will not reject your *faith* because it is weak, nor your *love* because it is feeble. He will not *despise the day of small things*. Even to the Philadelphian Church, which had only a *little strength*, there was set before it "an open door which no man could shut" (Revelation 3:8). There is life in the weak ant — as well as in the lordly lion. There is life in the tiny moss or spire of grass — as well as in the giant tree. There is life in the helpless infant — as well as in the full grown man. So, both "little faith" as well as "great faith" indicate the existence of spiritual life; and once the spiritual life has commenced — it can never die. He who has begun the good work will carry it on — that life is "hid with Christ in God."

Unlike the candle of the *wicked* — who can put out the candle of the godly? Not God, for He has justified His people. Not Christ, for He has died for His people. Not the Holy Spirit, for He seals His people the day of everlasting redemption. Not death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers; for none shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Yes, and if we were to ascend amid the throng of the upper sanctuary, we would see, among glorified lamps set in that heavenly Temple, those who were once "flickering candles," feeble sparks — but who now, purified from the smoke and dross of earthly corruption, are shining "like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever!"

*"When anxiety was great within me — Your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer!"*  
Psalm 94:19

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