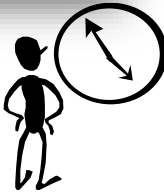


Inside this issue:

<i>School Shootings - the Heart of the Problem</i>	1
<i>Created for a Purpose</i>	4
<i>The Death of the Righteous</i>	5
<i>Giving Attention to God</i>	5
<i>A.M. Sermon Outline:</i>	6
Improper Attitudes Toward Sin	
Duty Rosters	7
Announcements & For the Record	8



Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(Or every other week)

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.
Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

School Shootings - the Heart of the Problem

By Jarrod M. Jacobs

This last week brought us another horrific historical event. Nineteen dear students and two teachers in Uvalde, TX, were killed in a random act of violence by an 18-year-old Salvador Ramos. Reports tell us he also killed his grandmother before going to Robb Elementary School on his rampage. The husband of one of the slain teachers has since died in an apparent heart attack. The family said the grief of losing his wife brought this calamity. The tragedies continue to climb in the aftermath of this shooting.

554 Dead Since 1999

Though we know that school shootings have happened before 1999 (the earliest recorded in 1840), it seems that since the Columbine (CO) school shooting, these events have been on our “radar screens.” I saw a posting that said there have been 554 people killed in school shootings since 1999. To put it mildly, this is a severe problem we face in this country. Let me hasten to add the number “554” does not include school shootings or other violent behavior that has taken place worldwide. This number reflects only the shootings in the US since 1999.

When we are faced with these events, the voices seeking to ban all guns are the loudest heard. It is believed that if guns were banned, or at the very least, made harder to obtain than they are currently, such acts of violence would be avoided. Obviously, if guns were outlawed, then the statistics for death and injury by gun violence would be significantly lowered. If firearms are not available to the majority of citizens, they obviously would not be able to shoot one another.

What Is the Answer to the Violence?

However, is the banning of firearms the answer to violence? Let me suggest this response is short-sighted. Outlaw-

ing guns might have a temporary effect of lowering a statistic. However, someone determined to do violence to others will find a weapon, whether it is a fist, a baseball bat, a stick or stone, a bomb, a sword, a knife, a book, a chain, a whip, a board, a chair, (you see my point?), etc. In the right hands, almost anything can become a weapon (even our words)! I remember a school bus ride when I was in the 4th or 5th grade, and an older boy got upset and broke a coke bottle (we had glass bottles back then) and began swinging the broken bottle around in an attempt to cut the bus driver! He had no gun or knife, but he had a broken glass bottle he was ready to plunge into anyone who came near him! There was not a gun within a mile of us that day, yet lives were threatened. If certain people had witnessed what I had, I wonder what they would suggest we ban?

Violence is a Matter of “Heart Control.”

Violence is in a person’s heart, and it will come out if we do not get these feelings under control! Remember Cain (Genesis 4:1-11)? I see no record in the Bible of what weapon (if any) Cain used against Abel, but I know that after their argument, Abel was dead (Genesis 4:8)! Friends, could I suggest it is not another law we need. Instead, we need Jesus!

Jesus taught, *“Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and goes into the sewer? But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man”* (Matthew 15:17-20, LSB).

Paul said something similar. *“But 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”* (I Cor. 9:27). He later wrote, *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”* (II Corinthians 10:3-5).

We are encouraged to think about things that are *“true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”* (Philippians 4:8).

What do those four passages show us? They show that if we think about something long enough, we will do it! If we think about something long enough, we will say it! Therefore, let us think about things that are godly, lovely, pure, honest, etc. (Philippians 4:8)! This will bless us! Thinking about the wicked and ungodly defiles us!

What is Going into Our Minds?

In the case of the Uvalde shooting, we cannot talk to Salvador Ramos about his

motivation, for he was shot during the event. However, there are others who have committed violent acts that can be interviewed. Often, those who have committed violent acts will say that their actions resulted from time spent thinking about violent things. Sometimes, bullying motivates people's wickedness (think: revenge). At other times, something else was the motivation. Yet, it can be agreed that at the beginning, these people were thinking about things they should not have been thinking about. After a while, thoughts became actions, just as the Bible warns!

Friends, our brains retain everything seen, heard, smelled, felt, tasted, etc. It is not like we can think about something evil and then turn on the "garbage disposal" and send it away! These things stay in the mind. This is what Jesus taught in Matthew 15! This is why Paul said to think about the good and righteous things (Philippians 4:8)! We think about the right things in expectation that this is what will come out in our words and actions, and not the evil.

The Answer to Much of the Violence We Witness.

We mentioned above the need for Jesus' teaching and the need to listen to the words of Scripture. Allow the words of truth (John 17:17) to guide us in our youth and into our old age (Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1). To accomplish what the Bible describes, it means we need people alert and doing their jobs! We need to care for others and realize we are our "brother's keeper" (Genesis 4:9; Matthew 7:12; 22:39; Galatians 6:2; James 2:8)!

Parents, where are you? Our children need direction, focus, and discipline. Guiding them in correct thinking now while their brains are still maturing will help them cope and overcome when they face hardships in the future. This is not the job of school teachers. This is the parents' job! "*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4, LSB, NAS)! Mothers need to be "*in behavior as becometh holiness ... teach the young women ...*" (Titus 2:3-5).

In addition to these, let older men "*be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance*" (Titus 2:2, LSB). Never forget the power we have to influence others. Therefore, let us make sure we are influencing people in a godly way (Matthew 5:14-16)! Who knows, but a word or action by a parent, grandparent, sibling, or even a respected person could mean the difference between life and death! Yes, it is that important!

Conclusion

If every nation on earth produced a law that banned guns from every country, we still would not have addressed the issue that motivates mass murder. Until we address this, the violence will never end. Men will find ways to kill and harm others. It was done before guns, gun powder, bullets, etc., ever crossed our minds! Sadly, it will continue until our "heart problem" is addressed in every family!

Created for a Purpose

By Matthew W. Bassford

One of the greatest apparent advantages of a godless way of life is the freedom that it allows. No longer must the unbeliever be concerned with the law of God and whether it permits him to do what he wants to. Instead, he is free to do whatever he thinks is right.

However, this seeming benefit comes at a steep cost. When we are free to do whatever we want, there is nothing for us to do. There is no meaning for us to achieve, no purpose for us to fulfill.

When we point this out to atheists, they often reply that they are free to create their own meaning. You can decide to make your life about whatever you want it to be about! Sadly, the reality here does not measure up to the theory. The goals that we choose for ourselves inevitably prove unfulfilling.

This is well illustrated by the first couple of chapters of Ecclesiastes. In them, Solomon deploys the nearly unlimited resources that he has amassed in order to discover the purpose for his life. He embarks on massive building projects and funds to the fullest every pleasure that he enjoys.

The worldly would suppose this to be heaven on earth. Many of them live with the goal of accumulating wealth until they too, like Solomon, can do anything they want. However, Solomon's experience with it was anything but heavenly, and the few who achieve such levels of wealth today also discover that it is unsatisfying.

As the Israelite king says in Ecclesiastes 2:11, "When I considered all that I had accomplished and what I had labored to achieve, I found everything to be futile and a pursuit of the wind. There was nothing to be gained under the sun." If we place our hope in ourselves, we will be disappointed.

Still others seek to find meaning in some earthly cause. There are those who give their lives to an organization or business; others live for an ideal, like environmentalism.

The problem is, though, that the results don't live up to our aspirations. Businesses fail or, worse still, fire us. Organizations fall short of their goals. Causes get sidetracked by human selfishness and pride. More subtly, success may be even harder to deal with. What do you do if some worldly goal of yours is completely achieved? Go fishing?

Thus, we see that honoring the purpose for which we are created, though it appears very restrictive, is actually a blessing. Christians can live a meaningful, fulfilled life from beginning to end without facing the disappointment that hounds the worldly. Because God's goals are bigger than we are, we never find them inadequate. Better still, when we come to the end of our lives, we can anticipate an eternal reward instead of oblivion (as some suppose) or eternal punishment. The yoke of Christ may appear to be a burden, but when we take it up, we find it to be lighter than anything else.

The Death of the Righteous

By Mike Johnson

Dealing with the death of a loved one can be one of the greatest agonies that a person has to face. We think of the death of a loved one in terms of heartache, tears, sorrow, and pain. Yet, Psalm 116:15 says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Let us consider how the death of one of God's saints is "precious" in His sight.

Whereas the death of a loved one causes us to have sorrow and pain, God has a different perspective. The verse above is looking at death more from the perspective of God. It is clear that God is delighted when a person becomes a Christian. Certainly, there is rejoicing in heaven. We can also say that He is delighted when He sees the new Christian progressing from a new born babe in Christ to a mature Christian. Parents rejoice when their children achieve certain goals, like earning their high school diploma, for example. God rejoices when we reach the end of our lives as a faithful Christian.

When we die, we are going home to God. Paul, according to Philippians 1:23, contemplated death near the end of his life and stated that he had a "desire to be with Christ; which is far better." (Note also II Cor. 5:6-8.) Those who die in Christ are going home to their heavenly Father.

We may refer to death as a "departure," and in a certain sense it is. There was once a tribe in Africa who referred to death, not as a departure, but as an arrival. They were looking at death from heaven's standpoint.

Losing a loved one is very difficult. But, if we can look at our loved one's death as God does; if we can look at their death as "precious," then perhaps we can be comforted when our loved ones die who are faithful Christians. We will probably still feel "sorrow upon sorrow" (Phil. 2:27), but we should also look at their death as God does. Their death is "precious" to the Lord.

Giving Attention to God

By Shane Williams

God is quite popular on Sunday. Millions of people around the world stop what they're doing to visit a building where they seek, in one way or another, to meet with others to worship, sing, and learn about God. For many, Sunday is THE day to think about God.

But then Monday rolls around. What place does God have in their lives then? When the emphasis is on a thousand other things, people can easily go all week without giving Him another thought.

That's not just a danger for everyone else. It may also be a danger for us, those who are truly committed to following the Lord. Too often God's name may not ever be heard the rest of the week.