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Trying God's Patience

by Heath Rogers

"You have wearied the Lord with your words; yet you say, 'In what way have we wearied Him?' In that you say, 'Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them,' or, 'Where is the God of justice?'" (Malachi 2:17).

God's urgent message to these Jews was that they were trying His patience. They had wearied the Lord with their words. The Hebrew word translated "wearied" means "to gasp, to be exhausted." The Jews were doing this to God with their words. Their continual complaints against God were beating Him down and wearing Him out.

The words which wearied the Lord were accusations against His righteousness, justice, and power. Since evildoers appeared to go unpunished by God, it was assumed that God either favored evil doers or He was powerless to punish them.

It is true that evil doers often appear to escape justice and punishment in this life. The Bible acknowledges this fact several times (Job 21:7-26; Ps. 73:1-14; Jer. 12:1; Hab. 1:2-4). However, the Jews of Malachi's day were using this observation as a license to practice evil. When anyone challenged their sin, their answer was to accuse God of being unjust or impotent.

These wicked men had tried God's patience, and His patience was coming to an end.

God's ways are best. Evil doers may appear to prosper and escape justice in this life. That is God's business. What we know is that no one will escape judgment on the Last Day. Nothing will be forgotten, overlooked, ignored, or hidden. In the meantime, we must endure the injustices of life with a strong faith in God. May we never weary God with our faithless words.

Church Recreation

- by Keith Camp

Recently I received an invitation to a facility that provided "ping pong, walking track, concerts, basketball, weights, pool table, board games, banquets, refreshments, etc." No, the invitation did not come from the local Boy's club. It came from a local church.

Increasingly churches have begun to take on the atmosphere of social clubs; some do rival local health spas. Yet, I do NOT read in the Bible where "the churches of Christ" (Romans 16: 16), in their life and death struggle to preach the gospel to a lost world, ever made such social/recreational provisions for that world (or themselves). Do you?

According to the New Testament (NT) the ONLY work God ordained the local church to do consists of: preaching the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:8), assembling for worship and edification (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25), and meeting the physical needs of destitute Christians (Acts 4:34-35; 6:1ff). The work of the local church was spiritual, NOT recreational.

And it certainly was not for lack of public interest that kept churches in the Bible out of athletics and entertainment. The world into which the gospel was first preached LOVED the sports arena. Their children played five different games of ball and the Roman emperors were masters at building public baths, theaters, stadiums and using them to 'politic' the people. The world back then had their superstar athletes, actors and actresses too. In fact, it is safe to say that America's enjoyment and pursuit of recreation/entertainment is equal to the people of NT times. But again, the NT is SILENT about local churches making ANY provision for the fulfillment of such interests. And get this! The hope of the gospel was still

"proclaimed in all creation under heaven" (Colossians 1:23). Churches in the NT understood that the world needed the gospel and its eternal benefits, not temporary distractions.

Are you disheartened, tired or fed-up with watching the church where you worship spend her time and resources to recreate and entertain herself and the world? Then, worship with a church that believes the gospel is STILL God's power to motivate all men to faith, obedience and salvation (Romans 1:16).

Parents: Consistency is a Key!

- by Greg Gwin

All godly parents are concerned about bringing up their children to be good, God-fearing people. In fact, we are commanded to do so (Ephesians 6:4).

There are lots of negative influences in the world that make this an increasingly difficult job. We worry about the impact of the schools, peer pressure, wickedness in the media, etc. In the face of all these forces that seek to ruin our kids, how can we succeed in teaching and training them to do what is right?

While there are many Scriptural principles that might be mentioned here, we want to emphasize just one --consistency. A key in bringing up faithful children is to be consistent.

An obvious area where this consistency needs to be seen is in attendance at the assemblies. If you allow your kids to miss the worship services in order to be at a ball game, you are teaching them that the ball game is more important than the Lord. If you let them skip the assemblies for school functions, band trips, dramas or plays, or to go camping, fishing or hunting, in all of these ways you are demonstrating that there are things that are more important than God. If you fail to worship when you are traveling or on vacation, you are showing them that serving God is something you do only when it is convenient. If you let them take part-time jobs that interfere with their attendance, you are giving them a clear sign that work and career considerations are higher in priority than spiritual things.

Many parents who are violating the principles stated above will scoff at these warnings. Yet the personal experiences of many people, as well as the plain teachings of God's Word indicate that this is the truth.

Joshua had it right when he said, "*as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*" (Joshua 24:15). There would be no compromise in his family. He would **LEAD** them in a consistent, faithful path. Let's imitate his example of consistency!