



RELIGION



SCRIPTURE OF
THE WEEK: 1 PETER Chapter
5

CONFIRM OR DENY

by Mattie Ann Callier-Spears

So often we find that as people grow older they tend to desire less of the world's influence and praise more. But that's only if they are born-again into the family of God.

As I've traveled through the various communities of Portland and other states, I have had occasion to find not one but many senior citizens who evidently never really understood the true meaning of growing in grace and in wisdom.

I shall share two of those stories with you. This is the first: There was once a young and beautiful girl, in her early teens, who no longer lived with her mother but now resides with her great aunt. Her great aunt actually began caring for the girl when she first began walking.

The mother of the girl is in and out of prison because of drugs, theft and prostitution. The mother sells drugs and she uses drugs. Even she was once as beautiful as her daughter but now the drugs have erased her beauty. Her face is scarred from the drugs and fights. Her eyes are yellow and blood-shot. Her hair is barely covering her scalp because of the drugs in her system. The mother is frequently seen walking the street at the late hours and during the evening hours peddling her wares.

The last time I saw her she had on an old cruddy wig. I didn't recognize her. I had stopped at the intersection, on Union and Alberta streets, when she came to my car. She didn't know it was me. She asked me for a ride. As I turned my face toward her, she was ashamed to find out it was me she had flagged down. She told me "Never mind" and she walked off.

It really doesn't matter how she gets the money for her stuff. The misuse of her body, to her, has become a valuable commodity. When that doesn't yield enough cash, she

walks into a store, any store, and removes part of its merchandise. She, later sells it on the street corners, in grocery store parking lots, in front of a church on Sundays, at the coliseum during large events or any place she feels she can operate unnoticed. When her daughter or her aunt needs or wants something, she'll just go out and steal it. No big deal!

In the meantime, the daughter is experiencing a life that is unlike that of a normal child's growth, development environment. The elderly aunt did all she could to raise the child but the mother was also living there. In and out. In and out. Each day she (the young child) witnessed her mother with other men. She heard and saw things that is ordinarily shielded from our young ones.

The elderly aunt died and the young girl is then subjected to a life, alone, with her mother's life style. She's sold to a 'John' at a very high price--because she's a virgin. And she is very young...10 years old.

One night there was a raid and the young girl was placed with the paternal grandparents because the mother has been placed in police custody, again. I spoke to the paternal grand parents. Their comments were "We just don't know what to do with her. When she's around her little boy cousins, she can't be left alone. She acts so-o-o- differently from the other children." Well, I would suppose so. This child has not been experiencing a NORMAL childhood. If the father had exerted more concern and care...If the great aunt had refused to let the mother come in contact with the child...If the mother had been reborn into God's family...If! If! If!

STORY #2: As I was driving down Union Avenue, last year, on my way to church, there were girls on every corner. On some corners, they stood in clusters. I had my children in the car with me and together we witnessed the display of flesh--on parade. The ages ranged from teens to the early 30's --it appeared. One of the boys shouted out the window "Go Home!" His brother said, "Man!

They don't even have respect for Sunday". Then, we saw her. As we continued our drive, we saw a female; who must have been in her 60's or 70's. She was clad in a red after-five dress, a fur coat, gloves, a long cigarette holder in her hand, high heels and a frilly hat. Everyone in the car exclaimed, "Oh No! What's that?" My response was "I guess she's showing the young ones 'the right way' to be a streetwalker". At that moment a feeling of sadness and disgust came over me. The saying goes "...With age comes wisdom." But here was somebody's grandmother or great aunt or whatever. Anyway! You'd think after all these years she would have had a time to learn about the ways of the world and how evil allures you. Don't you think?

There is no wonder why the young people don't respect their elders--when you see this kind of an example. It makes you wonder how prevalent this kind of moral decay has spread.

I discovered that 40 to 50 years ago when there were few blacks in Portland and a very few jobs available, Portland was well known for its prostitution and gambling. It was a way of life. I've also been told that many well-to-do black families, here in Portland, secured their wealth from their prostitution and gambling ventures from the 30's and 40's.

They did so well, at what it was that they did, they were able to invest their money, secure property and are living quite comfortably...they think. Unless you repent and ask the Lord's forgiveness; then, receive Christ into your hearts--our souls shall never find peace.

Yeah! Yeah! You may think that you are doing 'OK' and just as long as you don't upset anyone, kill anyone, just stay to yourself, lead an honorable life in the community and just all-around appear to be good... Do you know that that is NOT gonna work? You must go to God. Ask him to forgive your sins. Claim him as your own. Change your walk. Change your language. Just because you have been "cussin'" all your life--it doesn't

make it all right. Once you've accepted Christ in your life, you must study the WORD, practice living a life of humility and praying daily. God will change your talk, your friends, your interests. (To be continued in next week's issue...)

The Good Shepherd

No sweeter story has been told, Than this one from the days of old, And hope it never fails to bring, Clings to me like a living thing.

And even now I can recall The breathless wonder of it all, And that first moment when I knew That every word of it was true.

This tale is of a shepherd, who Had many sheep as shepherds do, Who guarded them both night and day,

For love alone-and not for pay. He never left His sheep for fear They come to harm without Him near,

He tended them with gentle care, And He was always, always there. They knew each other's voices well,

Sad or happy, He could tell, And they, in turn, wished nothing, save To share the love the Shepherd gave.

Other sheep not of His fold, He welcomed when the nights were cold,

How eagerly they followed Him, Knowing He would die for them. Gentle Shepherd of my soul, Like the little sheep of old,

Never let my footsteps stray, From Thy straight and narrow way May Thy blessed heart contain Sweet forgiveness once again,

For You have said, and it shall be, That... "I know Mine, and Mine know Me!"

Grace E. Easley

John 10:11-18

METHODIST ADDRESS CHILD POVERTY

More than 1500 United Methodist workers with children were challenged here August 3 to help the nation mobilize to prevent and reduce child poverty.

Unless national priorities are changed by the dawn of the new century, Beverly Jackson, staff member of the Children's Defense Fund, said 16 million or one in four of all American children will be poor. Today that number is 13 million.

"Our children are growing poorer while our nation is growing richer," she said. "All groups of children are poorer today than at the beginning of the decade-- especially white children whose poverty rates increased by almost a third."

While national security "teeters atop an overstocked, overpriced suicidal arsenal in which we have invested \$1.9 trillion since 1980", she said \$40 billion has been cut from programs for poor children and families.

Despite massive military expenditures she said the safety of children on the streets of American cannot be ensured. "Each day...an average of five youths under 18 were murdered...A child is safer in Northern Ireland than in America."

"If the energy department can ask for \$50 billion to increase our nuclear weapon capacity; if proponents of the Strategic defense Initiative (SDI) can ask for \$5 billion a year...; if the Pentagon does not hesitate to ask for almost \$50 billion

to build a new stealth bomber...; if bankers can call for a proposed \$80- to \$100-million to bail out deregulated, imprudent savings and loans; do not tell me that this nation is unable to afford the \$27 billion dollars it would take to lift its 13 million children out of poverty."

Before the applause stopped, however, she directed her questions at the participants and the local churches where they work. "If we can have a building expansion campaign or church building fund, we can have a child enrichment fund, we can have a campaign for children."

Despite the gloomy statistics, she said the church is in a unique position to help children who "need a massive investment of love."

Not only will American children be poorer at the turn of the century, but Ms. Jackson said there will be fewer of them to carry the weight of an aging America and a multi-trillion dollar federal debt.

"In the waning years of the 20th Century, doing what is morally right for children and doing what is necessary to save our national skins has converged," she said. "I see the 1990's as a marvelous opportunity to revitalize and strengthen our democracy."

Before going to the Children's Defense Fund in Washington, Ms. Jackson served for 8 years as director of the Department of Human Welfare at the Board of Church and Society.

BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS AND HOPE IN NORTH-EAST PORTLAND

Neighbors in Northeast Portland are banding together to build friendships and give a face-lift to the community around N.E. 27TH and Killingsworth. An area clean-up and

block party will be held Saturday, August 12th 10 am - 2 pm at Vernon Presbyterian Church (5425 NE 27th).

The activity is being supported by local merchants, realtors and the

Presbytery of the Cascades. Invited guests include: Mayor Clark, city and county commissioners, police, and church officials.

Vernon Presbyterian Church be-

longs to the Portland Organizing Project, a community-based action group, and the block party is one of two P.O.P. sponsored clean-ups in Northeast Portland on the 12th.

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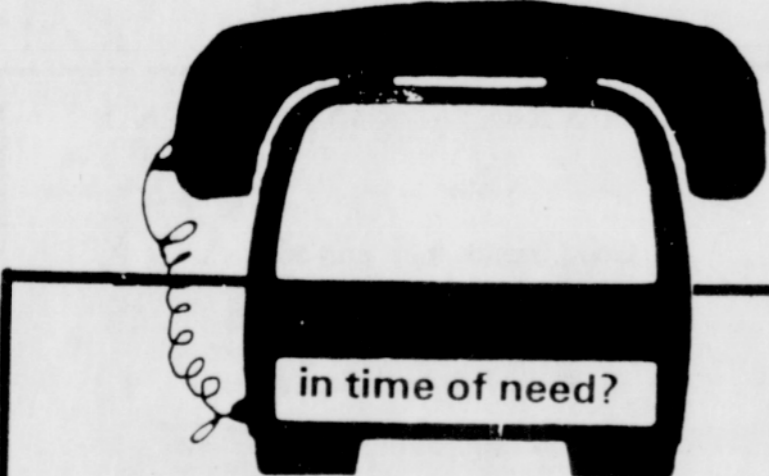
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