

# TRUTH

“And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).



## Boasting and Swellings

Harold Fite

The tongue is a small organ, but it contributes mightily to the function of the human body. It plays its part in taking in and swallowing food. It is the primary organ of taste and the principle organ of articulate speech. It is like the rudder of a ship; like a bridle in the horses' mouths (Jas. 3:3, 4). It has power to influence our whole course and destiny. “So the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things (Jas. 3:5).

Whatever the tongue articulates, begins in the heart: “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). Boasting stems from a heart filled with pride and self-confidence. One who is proud “thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think.” He has a bloated concept of his own importance; he wraps himself in self-glory and vaunting. His boasting is but the revelation of his heart.

The boastful person is loud, boisterous, ostentatious, pompous, arrogant, and a braggart. “Boast” is rendered “glory” in the ASV (2 Cor. 10:15; 11:10; Eph. 2:9). One who boasts speaks in “great swelling words (a puffin). His speech is extravagant and arrogant. He is a self-boasting person. Socially we would call him a bore, a windjammer.

“Folks with a lot of brass are seldom polished.”

Swellings were one of many sins Paul did not want to find in Corinth (2 Cor. 12:20). Peter identifies false teachers as those who utter great swelling words of vanity, to entice others to sin (2 Pet. 2:18). Jude warns about “murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts (and their mouth speaketh great swelling words), showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage” (Jude 16). The Edomites boasted of their seemingly impregnable fortification: “who shall bring me down to the ground”? The Lord responded, “I will bring thee down” (Obad. 3, 4). The pride of his heart had deceived him. “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18).

Men boast to elevate self. Theudas boasted himself to be somebody (Acts 5:36). The Pharisee boasted “that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in a week; I give tithes of all that I get” (Luke 18:11, 12). Self-glory is vainglory, and “is not of the Father, but of the world” (1 John 2:16). Self-boasting is the opposite of love. Love  
*see “Boasting” on p. 754*

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## Filthy Speech

Tom O'Neal

Among the things that Paul wrote to the Ephesians was “Let no corrupt communication, proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (4:29) and “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children: And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints: Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks” (5:1-4). To the Colossians, Paul said, “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth” (3:8).

All Christians have heard friends, neighbors, and relatives use filthy speech at some time or another. Sad to say, some who claim to be God’s children have engaged in the use of filthy speech. One of the ways one can engage in filthy speech is by telling filthy or dirty jokes. Sadder even still is the fact that some preachers are not ashamed to use filthy speech or tell dirty jokes, some even in the presence of other gospel preachers. It seems that some are not embarrassed by their filthy mouths.

What is corruptness? Of “corrupt” Thayer says, “rotten, putrid . . . corrupted by age and no longer fit for use, worthless” (568). W.E. Vine says, “corrupt, rotten, (akin to *sepo*, to rot), primarily, of vegetable and animal substances, expresses what is of poor quality, unfit for use, putrid. It is said of a tree and its fruit, Matt. 7:17, 18; 12:33; Luke 6:43; of certain fish, Matt. 13:48 (here translated “bad”); of defiling speech, Eph. 4:29) (1:95).

What is filthiness? Of *aisochrones* W.E. Vine says, “baseness (from *aischos*, shame, disgrace), is used in Eph. 5:4, of obscenity, all that is contrary to purity” adding “Broadly speaking, *aisochrones* signifies whatever is disgraceful” (II:98-99). Thayer says, “baseness, dishonor” (17).

What is foolish talking? Of *morologia* W.E. Vine says, “from *moros*, foolish, dull, stupid, and *lego*, is used in Eph. 5:4; it denotes more than just idle talk. Trench describes it as ‘that ‘talk of fools’ which is foolishness and sin together” (121).

What is jesting? Of *eutrapelia* W.E. Vine says, “properly denotes wit, facetiousness, versatility (lit., easily turning, from *eu*, well, *trepo*, to turn.) It was used in the literal sense to describe the quick movements of apes and persons. Pericles speaks of the Athenians of his day (430 B.C.) as distinguished by “*Filthy Speech*” on p. 755

# Whispering and Backbiting

Brett Hogland

One of the greatest marks of spiritual maturity and personal accountability is the recognition of the power of the tongue — the potential that it has for immeasurable good or evil. The Lord reveals this fact with great clarity when he says that “death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Prov. 18:21). A failure on our part to recognize this power will surely result in spiritual failure. The wise man reveals that the tongue may be a “tree of life,” or it may be “an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (Prov. 15:4; Jas. 3:8). The challenge for each one of us is to transform our hearts and thus render our tongues to be instruments of righteousness rather than instruments of unrighteousness (Rom. 6:13). This study focuses on the tongue as an instrument of unrighteousness, specifically in the realm of whispering and backbiting. It is our goal to identify the problem of whispering and backbiting and to let the Scriptures teach us how to overcome this sin of the tongue.

## The Nature of the Sin

Whispering and backbiting are so closely related that W.E. Vine refers to them as being “synonymous” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* 674). Their similarity is seen in the fact that they are spoken of in tandem in Romans 1:29-30 and in 2 Corinthians 12:20.

Thayer says that the word *psithurismos* (5587), translated “whisperings,” means “secret slander” (*Greek English Lexicon* 676). The word “whisperer” in Proverbs 16:28 is a translation of the Hebrew word *neergahn* and is also translated “talebearer” in Proverbs 18:8; 26:20, 22. This indicates that whispering includes the act of secretly repeating a matter that will slander or damage another person’s reputation.

Thayer says that the meaning of *katalalia* (2636), translated “backbitings” means “defamation, evil speaking” (*Ibid.* 332). W.E. Vine says that “*katalalos* (2637), a ‘backbiter,’ and *katalalia* (2636) ‘backbiting,’ are formed from *kata*, ‘against,’ and *laleo*, ‘to speak’” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* 48). Therefore, it’s most basic meaning is to speak against or to speak evil. Consequently, the corresponding verb, *katalaleo* (2635), is translated “speak evil” four times and “speak against” one time (Jas. 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:16).

Our perception of backbiting is that of a verbal attack which is concealed or that comes from behind — like our use of the word “backstabber.” Yet the word in the New Testament seems to convey the general sin of speaking

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evil. W.E. Vine says that the distinction between a whisperer and a backbiter is that backbiter “denotes one guilty of open calumny,” and that whisperer denotes “one who does it clandestinely” (*Ibid.* 674).

However, the word “backbiting” in Proverbs 25:23 is a translation of the Hebrew word *sether* (5643) which is most often translated “secretly” or “secret,” “covert,” and in one case, “disguise.” This indicates that the Old Testament use of the word backbiting involves secret or covert action like that of the word whispering.

### The Motivation/Temptation

The temptation to defame or speak evil is founded on the age old misconception that I can be exalted by tearing down another person. This idea is rooted in self-centeredness and jealousy, and it is fueled by insecurity with one’s place or position in a group. When it appears to the self-centered and insecure person, that he cannot move ahead of others and be exalted, he or she resorts to pulling other people down below his level. To the unscrupulous, the end results are the same — they appear to be above their peers. The young wife who is jealous of her mother-in-law is often tempted to tear down her husband’s respect and honor for his mother in order to establish her place above the mother-in-law in her husband’s heart. The employee who sees others with superior skills or greater motivation moving ahead of him will be tempted to resort to defamation or evil speaking in order to slow down their progress and maintain his position. It may also be a situation where a person is tempted to speak evil in retaliation toward an enemy who has harmed him in some way, and it appears that his only recourse is to tear down his enemy’s reputation.

But why are we tempted to defame or speak evil by way of whispering? The reason is obvious — we are able to attack without reprisal or accountability for our words. By whispering I can remain undetected as I make accusations, raise suspicions, or even exaggerate the facts without threat or fear of being challenged by the accused to validate or document my accusations. Therefore, by slandering in secret, I can render more damage to my enemy or target with less risk of casualty to myself. This temptation to attack from behind is rooted in cowardice and injustice. The righteous are bold, knowing that they have the truth on their side, but the unrighteous must resort to underhanded tactics in order to gain advantage (Prov. 28:1). By whispering and making our attack from behind, the accused does not have the ability to face his accuser and seek justice. The temptation to whisper is primarily based on the misconception that, because we are hidden in our attack, there will be little or no personal consequence as a result of our slander.

### The Danger

There will be tremendous consequences for the whisperer and backbiter. While we may go undetected by men

when we whisper our cutting words, we do not go undetected by the all-knowing God for “the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (Prov. 15:3). The Lord has assured us “that for every idle word that men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment,” and this certainly includes words whispered in secret (Matt. 12:36)! The wicked have always found a false sense of security in working their sinful deeds undercover, as “the eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, ‘no eye will see me’; and he disguises his face” (Job 24:15). Yet God replies, “Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him . . . do I not fill heaven and earth?” (Jer. 23:24). Yes, there is great danger for the whisperer and backbiter for God hears every word uttered in secret and assures justice and vindication when he says, “Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy” (Ps. 101:5).

Whispering and backbiting not only pose a danger to the whisperer but they also present immeasurable danger to the one being slandered and to countless others who find themselves in the middle of the discord that is sown by the whisperer. There are many ways that the tongue can be “an unruly evil,” but few of them are as “full of deadly poison” as the sin of whispering and backbiting. This sin causes irreparable damage to reputations, friendships, families, and churches. The devastating effects of whispering spread subtly but rapidly because of its concealed nature and affects scores of people before it is realized. The whisperer is able to fly under the radar with his defamation, slander, and libel until the seeds of discord have germinated and the damage is out of hand.

The damage to reputations as a result of whispering and backbiting cannot be overstated. God emphasizes the value of a man’s reputation when he says that “a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches” (Prov. 22:1). A good name takes years to build and the point made here is that no one can simply buy a good reputation . . . nor can the slanderer rebuild, repair or buy back the good name that he has ruined with his secret slander. No amount of money will suffice. No amount of sorrow will restore it.

Many of us have witnessed, first hand, that “a whisperer separates the best of friends” (Prov. 16:28). Proverbs 17:9 tells us that this is done when the whisperer “repeats a matter” that should be kept in confidence. We see the friendships of men like David and Jonathan and realize that these friendships are some of the most valuable relationships that we enjoy here in this life (2 Sam. 1:26). Yet the power of secret slander can destroy the closest of these relationships. It may be an insecure friend who wants an exclusive friendship with you, and little by little, he repeats things said in confidence or whispers statements that are taken out of context or exaggerated, until he has driven a wedge between you and every other friend that you have.

The sad thing about it all is that you seldom know the source of the alienation. It might also be a husband who is insecure with his wife's close friendship with her sister or a wife who is insecure with her husband's friendship with his parents. Regardless of the closeness of the friendship, little by little, whispering and backbiting will poison the well of any relationship.

Countless churches have been ravaged and divided by the effects of whispering and backbiting when rumors and innuendo are quietly spread from one member to another. The danger is hard to see at first because the whisperer often convinces himself and others that he is just sharing this thought in confidence out of concern. Yet evil is dug up concerning brethren and matters are revealed that were of a private nature and should have been left concealed (Prov. 16:27-28; 17:9). Like "tasty trifles," the confidential and damaging matters repeated by the whisperer are taken in by one brother after another as if they are addicted to the morsels of the talebearer (Prov. 26:22). Suspicion grows, mutual respect fades, and brotherly love grows cold as damaging comments are increasingly spread. With enough time, the wedges are driven to the point that the hurt seems irreparable. It is no wonder that the Lord hates "one who sows discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19). Never underestimate the danger of whispering and backbiting in even the closest of congregations, for "by the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked" (Prov. 11:11).

### Overcoming the Problem of Whispering and Backbiting

Unfortunately, there is no magic bullet that will eradicate the sin of whispering and backbiting. The principles that will help us to overcome this sin are not difficult to understand, but they are difficult to implement and require complete devotion to succeed.

One of the fundamental facts that we must learn in order to overcome this sin is the fact that we will never control our tongue without first controlling our heart. James tells us that "no man can tame the tongue" (Jas. 3:8). This certainly does not mean that we cannot control our tongue, but it does mean that we cannot tame or train our tongue to speak righteously when our heart is full of unrighteousness, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34-35; Jas. 3:11-12). We say what we think! Think evil — speak evil. The more that we allow ourselves to think evil of another person, the more we will be tempted to speak evil of that person. So the key is to think on the right things (Phil. 4:8). When we have "tamed" the heart the tongue will follow.

One of the greatest keys to having the proper thoughts about a person is to have the proper love toward that person. It is impossible to have the proper love for a person and to

secretly slander him at the same time. "A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it," and this would hold just as true for the whispering or backbiting tongue (Prov.26:28). "Love does not envy . . . does not seek its own . . . thinks no evil" (1Cor. 13:4-5). Whispering and backbiting simply cannot dwell in a heart that is filled with love for where there is no envy, self-seeking, or evil surmising there is no soil for the seeds of whispering or backbiting. The man who loves his neighbor or brother will believe the best about him and seek to protect him rather than attack him. Rather than revealing secrets and exposing vulnerability, "he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter" regarding the one that he loves (Prov. 11:13).

The proper love for my enemy will protect me from the temptation to whisper and backbite toward him. I must be committed to "bless those who curse (me)" rather than seeking to harm his reputation in retaliation (Matt. 5:44).

It sometimes appears that our enemies and the enemies of the cross are making progress in their evil efforts and we begin to think that our only recourse is to digress to their level and use the carnal tactics of whispering and backbiting in order to slow their progress. Yet I cannot allow myself to be "overcome by evil," but instead, I must be determined to "overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:14-21). I must also be ever mindful that "we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Cor. 10:3-4). I do not believe that Paul is speaking about the carnal weapons of swords, or spears here, but rather the carnal weapons of whispering, backbiting, lying and maligning. These were the carnal weapons that Paul's detractors used but he was affirming that these were not the weapons of our warfare. We must reject these carnal weapons in favor of the mighty weapons of God. We must still cast down error with the truth of the gospel and we must confront false teachers to their face, but we must never attack them from behind through whispering and backbiting (Gal. 2:11).

Finally, we must commit ourselves to practice church discipline toward those who refuse to repent of whispering and backbiting (Tit. 3:10,11). If we turn our heads from this sin in the church it will be our undoing. Strife will prosper and divisions will become imminent. "Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases" (Prov. 26:20). If we want to completely overcome whispering and backbiting in the church, we will have to be willing to purge out the unrepentant talebearer, whisperer, and backbiter (1 Cor. 5:7, 8, 13; 2 Thess. 3:6,14).

With the proper love for my brother, neighbor, and enemy, I will overcome the sin of whispering and backbiting at its very foundation.  

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# Sinful Silence

Andy Alexander

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There are times when silence is good and preferred. However, there are other times when silence is sinful. Times when we should be speaking the truth, but refrain for some reason. We want to examine the subject of sinful silence. When is it a sin not to speak?

## Jesus' Example

Jesus was the Master Teacher. He always knew exactly what to say and when to say it. He also knew when to be silent. In John 19:9-10, Jesus stood silent before Pilate as Pilate questioned him about the charges the Jews were bringing against him. At other times he spoke, comforting some and convicting others. In John 11, Jesus comforted the sisters of Lazarus when he spoke about the resurrection, but in the previous chapter he angered his hearers by telling them the truth about his divine nature (John 10:22-39). Jesus spoke even though he knew that many of his hearers would be upset.

In Matthew 15 Jesus was questioned about his disciples not washing their hands when they ate bread. The scribes and Pharisees implied the disciples sinned by violating the tradition of the elders (Matt. 15:2). Jesus spoke up and rebuked these religious leaders for violating the commandments of God by their man-made traditions. Then he gave them an example of this true sin, called them hypocrites, and pronounced their worship vain. This rebuke offended these men and when the disciples brought this to Jesus' attention, he replied, "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Matt. 15:3-14). Even when some would be offended by the truth, Jesus spoke.

In Matthew 21, Jesus was questioned about his authority for doing the things he was doing (Matt. 21:23). The previous day he had cleansed the temple and healed those who came to him in the temple (Matt. 21:12-15). He in turn questioned the chief priests and elders about the baptism of John. Was it from heaven or from men? The religious leaders could not answer in a way that would aid their cause so they chose to be silent (Matt. 21:23-27). There was a truthful answer but they chose silence. Why would people be silent when they know the truth? Could it be that

the truth hurts their cause, their pride, their pocket book or all three, and they would rather be silent than speak and be exposed as hypocrites they were? When we know the truth and refuse to speak for sinful reasons, then our silence is sinful.

Jesus' love for the sinner prompted him to teach truth at all times, whether or not the sinner wanted to hear it. In Matthew 19:16-26, Jesus taught the rich young ruler the truth about what he needed to do in order to inherit the kingdom of God. The young ruler could not bear to give up his riches for Jesus, but Jesus did not soften or compromise his message in order to comfort the ruler or make him feel less guilty about his situation. The ruler went away sorrowful, but his sorrow was caused not by the truth Jesus spoke, but by the sin in his life he was not willing to give up. Jesus' love for the sinner would not allow him to ignore sin, rather he confronted the sinner with his sin and taught him the truth that could forever rid him of his sorrow.

There are many other instances similar to the one above. When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well he confronted her with her adultery (John 4:16-18). He was not silent when dealing with the woman taken in adultery in John 8:2-11. He dealt with the sins of the men who brought the woman to him first, then he admonished the woman "go and sin no more." In Matthew 16 Jesus warned his disciples to beware of the false doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 16:5-12). He called these groups by name and warned them to watch out for their doctrine. Jesus publicly exposed the hypocrisy of his adversaries when he spoke up in the synagogue one Sabbath (Luke 13:10-17). Many more such examples could be cited, but these are sufficient to show that it is right to speak, expose error, and convict men of sin.

## The Apostles' Example

The apostle Paul stated that he was free from the blood of all men because he declared the whole counsel of God's word to his hearers (Acts 20:26-27). Paul knew he was responsible to God for the things he spoke, and he feared God more than he feared man; therefore he spoke so as to please God (1 Thess. 2:4; Luke 12:5). Our silence is sinful when we cease to preach the truth we know needs to be

preached. Our silence may be caused by fear of what men will think of us, or what men may do to us, or that the truth we speak may hurt someone's feelings. The fact is people need the truth, they need to know when they are in sin so that they can choose to obey or disobey (John 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:22). If we refuse to speak and inform them of the truth, it is as if we are making the decision for them.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit convicted men of their sins. He did this through the teaching of the apostles. Had the apostles been silent, refused to speak the light of God's word revealed by the Spirit, they would have sinned, and the people would have been left in the dark (Acts 2).

### **A Modern Example**

Let's notice an example: We are teaching a couple the gospel and learn that they are living in adultery. Instead of lovingly showing them the teaching of Christ on the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, and allowing them to choose between their sin and serving the Lord, we say nothing. We are silent because we do not want to hurt their feelings or appear judgmental or some other misguided reason. Our silence leaves them with the impression their marriage is acceptable to God when in reality it is unlawful. John the Baptist faced such a situation and he spoke the truth (Mark 6:18). This resulted in his beheading. Though John lost his life because he spoke the truth, he will stand guiltless of the blood of Herod and Herodias on the day of judgment. Had he been silent when he had the opportunity to speak the soul-saving truth to those in sin, he would have sinned. The truth is not always welcomed by those in sin, but the fault lies with the sinner and not those who speak the truth.

### **Sinful Silence**

God said through his prophet Isaiah, "His watchmen are blind, They are all ignorant; They are all dumb dogs, They cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (Isa. 56:10). In Isaiah's day those who should have spoke and warned God's children remained silent. This is an example of sinful silence. These silent sinners had their reasons for not sounding out the warnings of God. "Yes, they are greedy dogs Which never have enough. And they are shepherds Who cannot understand; They all look to their own way, Every one for his own gain, From his own territory. 'Come,' one says, 'I will bring wine, And we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink; Tomorrow will be as today, And much more abundant'" (Isa. 56:11-12). Sounding words of warning is not popular and will not produce a large following because many people simply do not want to hear such sermons (2 Tim. 4:2-5). Also, notice how money is tied to silence. By not speaking what needs to be spoken, these men profit financially. Could it be possible that there are men today in the Lord's church who will not sound words of warning, will not preach negative sermons,

and are silent while sin marches on in their midst because of the love of money?

There are obvious sins in some, if not most churches — forsaking the assembly, immodest dress, lack of spiritual growth, and lack of zeal to name a few. When elders and preachers know these are present and say nothing to correct the situation, this silence is sinful. Some members of the Lord's church display prom pictures which are memorials to the sins committed by their children. Dancing in and of itself is sinful and most of the clothes worn by the girls to these events are immodest. Silence from the elders and the pulpit about such sin does not help the sinner, and those who remain silent when they should be speaking are guilty of the blood of these individuals (Acts 20:26-27).

### **Failing To Encourage: Sinful Silence?**

Another type of sinful silence that may not usually be thought of is that of refusing to encourage and lift up God's people. It is probably not so much a refusal to speak but a neglect to speak. Some preachers only seem to have negative sermons and negative comments. There are plenty of things to speak that would lift up and encourage, but they fail to see it or fail to note it. We are commanded to exhort and edify one another (2 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 3:13). Preachers need to balance their lessons with both positive and negative lessons.

Also, elders need to be careful. In some congregations the elders rarely, if ever, speak publicly, but when they do it is usually to bring up some negative point — noise in the assembly, forsaking the assembly, poor attendance in classes, people late to the services, children running in the parking lot, etc. These are things that need to be addressed from time to time, but the congregation also needs words of commendation from its leaders. Jesus, in the Book of Revelation, commended the churches where commendations were possible and then rebuked where necessary (Rev. 2, 3). A reading of the epistles of Paul will also reveal that he commended churches and individuals whenever possible (1 Thess. 5:14; Rom. 16:1-16; Heb. 12:12). Elders, examine your comments to the congregation — are they always or mostly of a negative nature? It is very easy to criticize. It comes naturally to most of us. Let's look for and use our opportunities to praise those who are doing a noteworthy job in the kingdom (1 Cor. 11:2). Along this same line, when commending the brethren, don't always follow the commendation with a rebuke or admonishment. The praise may then begin to sound hollow or just used as an excuse to rebuke.

### **Cowardly Silence**

Silence is looked on by many in the world as a sign of patience and tolerance. Those who speak up and denounce sin are charged with being judgmental and harsh. Actually, silence in many cases is a sign of cowardice and compromise. In Antioch Paul rebuked Peter for the sin of

# Their Works Follow Them

David Dann

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In the midst of receiving the Revelation on the island of Patmos, the apostle John says, “Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them’” (Rev. 14:13).

Death is defined in Scripture as the point at which a man’s spirit departs from his physical body (Jas. 2:26). As death is associated with certain pain, suffering, and sorrow, it is not something that we naturally like to contemplate. However, we are often forced to consider death as we try to come to terms with the reality and finality that it brings. While death is as common as birth, the emotional pain and distress we experience upon the death of a loved one can be nearly unbearable. Mankind has done, and continues to do, seemingly everything possible in order to prevent death and ease the suffering of death. Yet death continues.

As Christians, our view of death should not be the same as the view of those who neither know the Lord or the power of his word. It is important for our understanding

and view of death to be rooted in the instruction on the subject presented in God’s word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). This is particularly true when it comes to our view concerning those who have died in the Lord. Revelation 14:13 instructs us as to what our view must be.

## Those Who Die in the Lord Are Blessed

**1. What does it mean to be “blessed”?** The word “blessed” literally means “happy.” In saying, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord,” the Bible emphasizes the idea that there can, in fact, be a sense of happiness associated with death in certain cases. The truth is that those who die in the Lord are in a blessed, or happy state. While their earthly end may be accompanied by suffering and pain, their situation beyond physical death is actually fortunate.

**2. We must die “in the Lord” in order to be blessed.** There is one Lord — Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 8:6). To be “in the Lord” is to be in a relationship with Christ. One is brought into fellowship with the Lord by believing and obeying the gospel of Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). The only way one can

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hypocrisy. It took courage to rebuke someone of Peter’s stature, but Paul would not sit silently by and allow sin to do its evil work (Gal. 2:11-21). Interestingly, Barnabas and other Jews who knew better just sided with Peter. Paul stood against them all and spoke up. This is an example of how elders should address such public sin in their midst (Tit. 1:9-11). Paul taught Titus to “speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1). The word is to be preached (2 Tim. 4:2).

Many religious leaders of today will not debate their doctrine publicly or privately, and their followers are just as silent. These followers have little or no Bible knowledge; therefore, they are afraid to speak out, because they are not sure what they believe. The religious leaders know that if they speak out, their doctrine will be proved false when compared to the doctrine of Jesus. When their doctrine is

shown to be false by public debate, they will likely lose some followers who are interested in knowing the truth. More importantly to the false teachers, they would lose the money these followers were giving. The false teacher has everything to lose and nothing to gain by speaking out. But, those who have the truth have nothing to fear from speaking that truth. We should not be ashamed of the gospel, but cry aloud the Word of God which is able to save lost souls (Rom. 1:16-17).

Our Lord was not silent when challenged on an issue. He spoke the truth to those in sin. We should thank God that Jesus was not silent. Will your neighbor or friend thank

you for speaking up or will he ask on the judgment day, “Why didn’t you speak to me about my sins?”



die “in the Lord” is if he is faithfully living “in the Lord” now. Those outside of Christ have no hope of happiness beyond the grave.

**3. The blessed state of those who die in the Lord.** The happy expectation of those who die in the Lord is based upon the fact that God has prepared a place of comfort for the souls of those who die faithful to him. When Jesus was about to die he said to the penitent thief, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). The righteous poor man, Lazarus, was “carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom” when he died, and was said to be in a state of comfort (Luke 16:23, 25). This is the fortunate state of those who die in the Lord until the final resurrection and judgment when the final reward of heaven will be realized (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

### **Their Rest From Their Labors**

**1. Life consists of work.** Psalm 104:23 says, “Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening.” Each day of our lives brings with it work that must be done. The Bible says, “All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing” (Eccl. 1:8). Some spend their time working at doing that which is evil, while others spend their time doing good. “The labor of the righteous leads to life, the wages of the wicked to sin” (Prov. 10:16).

**2. Man’s work ends at death.** Moses says, “The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Ps. 90:10). Upon death there is no more work to be done and nothing we have done can be changed in any way. For the righteous this is comforting, because they are promised rest from the

labors of life when this life is over (Heb. 4:9-10). On the other hand, there is no rest for the wicked after death, for, “the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night (Rev. 14:11).

### **Their Works Follow Them**

**1. We will be judged based on our works.** Paul says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). If we have not faithfully followed Christ it will be known in the judgment.

**2. Our works live on after we die.** The power of a godly life and example should not be underestimated. The good works a man does in his life may have a lasting influence and impact on others even after he dies. The short life that Jesus lived on earth left behind a powerful example for all of us to follow (1 Pet. 2:21-22). The works of those who die in the Lord may live on and encourage us to do good long after they have departed this life.

### **Conclusion**

What kind of an example will you leave behind for others once you have departed this life? What kind of an impact will your works have on others after you die? The answer to those questions depends upon what kind of life you are living now. Are you “in the Lord”? Remember, there is nothing blessed about the death of those who have not obeyed the gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 1:6-8).

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# Editorial Left-overs

Connie W. Adams

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## “He Restrained Them Not”

Some of the greatest characters in the Old Testament failed to train their own children well. Eli was such a man. He served as priest and mentor for God’s great servant, Samuel. But his own sons were rebels. They were described as “vile men” who took by force what they wanted and gratified their lust with women who came to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22). They refused to listen to their father when he tried to reason with them (vv. 23-25). The judgment of God came upon the house of Eli because “he restrained them not” (1 Sam. 3:13).

Children who grow up without proper correction are apt to be rebels. It starts early when children begin to test the limits as to what is allowed and what is not to be tolerated. Some children are even allowed to talk aloud through an entire service with no effort made to quieten them. The preacher is just supposed to ignore it, turn up the volume, and try to be heard. When you have several at the same time engaged in such behavior, confusion reigns, worship is disturbed and the effort to present the gospel is wrecked. Whatever happened to parental control? Children who are allowed to show such continued disrespect for God and his worship are not being restrained at home either. They will also be a terror when they go to school and into larger society. Civility, courtesy, and good manners must be taught, sometimes with reinforcement.

It is sad to see people who have contributed much to the cause of the Lord, who have sacrificed time, money, and talent to help other people serve God, losing their own children to the devil. Don’t forget Eli.

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## Good and Bad Kings

Eli was not the only good man whose sons turned out to be evil. In the kingdom of Israel, beginning with Jeroboam, there was not one good king. But in Judah, there were notable exceptions to that. Yet, in one family lineage, from Jotham to Josiah, the kings were alternately good and bad. Jotham was a good king but his son Ahaz was bad. The son of Ahaz was Hezekiah, a good king. But his son was Manasseh and he was terrible. He practiced human sacrifice. His son, Josiah, was a reformer and tried to do what was right. How do you account for this conduct in alternate generations? Godliness is not a matter of genetics. It is learned. The same is true with wickedness. Ezekiel had it right when he said, “Yet say ye Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him” (Ezek. 18:19-20).

The Bible teaches personal accountability. Yet, it is the duty of parents to train their children in the way of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). Whether they choose to live up to the training will be decided by them when the time comes. Training takes time, energy, and patience. Do you suppose some of those good kings were so caught up in matters of state, that they neglected to properly train their own sons? Do you suppose there was not enough “quality time” spent with them?

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## It’s Not about Us!

The underlying premise of much of what is called “con-

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temporary worship” is that the added sparkle, lighting, theatrics, and jazzed up singing, clapping, and hand raising will give the worshiper a greater buzz, and he will go away all excited about what he got out of it. A secondary premise is that such worship will draw more people. But this misses a fundamental principle of true worship. It is not about us! It is about him! It is not directed to us but to the God of all the universe. It must meet his approval, not that of an audience. God “seeks men to worship him in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). “In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” (Heb. 2:12). “Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). So the question is not, What did I get out of worship? It is, What did he get out of it? Was it done according to his will? Or did we add something he did not authorize? Was it offered from the heart, not only with zeal, but according to knowledge (Rom. 10:1-2)? Was it reverential? Did I come before him with proper humility? If what we offer as worship glorifies and honors the true object of our devotions, then we ought to be satisfied with it and it won’t matter whether or not it impressed others. God’s ways and thoughts are not ours (Isa. 55:8-9). Let’s stop trying to put jam on the unleavened bread so it won’t be so dry and spiking the fruit of the vine so we will get a buzz from it. It is just not about us anyhow.

\* \* \* \* \*

### In Journeyings Often

By the time this article is printed, we will have completed another year of meeting work. I have now been in full-time gospel meeting work since 1975 so this brings us to thirty years of such work. That is a lot of packing, unpacking, traveling, not to mention a lot of preaching. Years ago, Luther Blackmon told me that every year about October he wanted to kick his suitcase. I know now what he meant. But after a few weeks at home during the winter during which I get to teach classes at Manslick Road in Louisville and do some of the preaching, we (Bobby is a true “soul-mate” in this work) are ready to hit the road and get into another year of preaching wherever brethren are kind enough to invite us. “Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel” and by the help of God, I plan to do that as long as he allows me to do it. All things are subject to his will. We have been blessed with health and strength and open doors. We work with small churches and large and try to preach what is needed, where it is needed, and when it is needed. The times are challenging, both among brethren and in the world at large, but the gospel is still the answer to all the woes of this old sinful world.

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## Laughing At Sin

Stan Adams

In Hebrews 3:13 we are warned of being “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” John warns us in 1 John 3:7, 8: “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that commits sin is of the devil.” Paul warns in Ephesians 5:6: “Let no man deceive you with vain words.” Sin is deceitful and the devil is crafty (1 Pet. 5:8). He is active and wants to lure Christians into his camp. Ephesians 5:3, 4 says, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becomes saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.”

With these Scriptures in mind, let us think for a moment about what we laugh about. Have you noticed that sin is portrayed as funny and humorous in the media today? Homosexuality is slowly being sold to the general public, and many Christians, as a harmless lifestyle, practiced by very bizarre, but “cute” and “nice” people. Couples living together and practicing fornication in a humorous setting has been and is the story line for countless situation “comedies” on television. Many Christians would not miss one of the episodes of such sinful behavior. “Reality shows” openly present fornication as acceptable to people who are “enlightened.” What passes for “comedy” these days is punctuated by cursing and suggestive routines. What is the purpose of all of this? The devil knows that what we can consider funny we will begin to slowly accept. There was a time when decent people cringed at the thought of homosexuality and if anything was said about it, it was whispered in private. It was a shameful disgrace to even have one of these perverted people (Rom. 1:25-27) in your community. Now godly people are bombarded with this sinful behavior. Folks, homosexual or heterosexual fornication is a sin (Gal. 5:19), and sin separates one from God (Isa. 59:2). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). *This is not a laughing matter, it is serious!* Laughing at sin is a sin (Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11). Be careful what you laugh at!

*From Sound Words, June 2004*

# Gopher Wood?

Donald Willis

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Those who call themselves brethren have begun to make some very irrational arguments. There seems to be no stable base of authority. Some are quick to condemn the spiritual concept that “God said what he meant, and meant what he said.” Man must not go beyond that which God has said. Possibly most of our readers would agree with this, but that is not the current language being used among some.

Recently, a preacher in Madisonville, Texas said that vocal music was our “tradition.” He further stated that he would only hope that God would save those who use mechanical instruments in their worship. *Whom God chooses to save belongs to Him! Our duty is to preach the word! Judgment belongs to God,* who incidentally said he would judge by the word. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Now, that is not too difficult to understand, but it does not fit the agenda of many.

God commanded Noah: “The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that *is* in the earth shall die. But with thee

will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee” (Gen. 6:13-18).

(Note: Gopher wood; three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high; a window [I think that means one, isn’t that what we learned in the third grade]; the door; three floors high. *That is specific!* There was some leverage given to Noah; but there was also specific authority. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for *sin is the transgression of the law*” [1 John 3:4]. When the law is given, it is sinful to transgress! Webster defines transgress, “to overstep or break [a law, commandment, etc.]; to go beyond [a limit, boundary, etc.],” and notes the verb intransitive means “to break a law, commandment, etc.; sin.” Sin? What does the Bible say about sin? “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” [Rom. 6:23]. Do what God says and receive eternal life through Jesus Christ; sin, and the wage is death! Now, you may not agree with this, but one has to admit it is what God said!)

Some who were “of us” have gone out “from us.” No longer is baptism essential to salvation, one is saved by faith; and baptism is the first act of obedience to Christ (read Mark 16:16). One can read this concept from Max Lucado, but not from Jesus or one of apostles. Further, divine inspiration commands, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19); “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16).

*That is not tradition; that is scriptural authority.* According to information received on the Internet, there was an invitation to a gathering at Abilene Christian College in 2004, and two worship assemblies would take place: one with the instrument and one without. The Oak Hills Church (which previously said they were “of Christ,” but dropped *of Christ* out) will commence worship assemblies with the instrument . . . which is consistent with what they preach . . . but a *violation* of that which God said. God did say, “gopher wood” and the same God commanded Christians to “sing and make melody in their heart,” not on a harp, piano, brass band, etc.

Jesus came to the earth during a time in which there were many kinds and forms of religion. Jesus did not sanction those religions, and even rejected the worship of the Jews when he stated, “. . . upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). Jesus did not say that everyone who believed in Jesus would be saved, regardless of their doctrine and/or worship. Jesus taught, “. . . in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9); and to be sure that we understood, it was repeated in Mark 7:7: “. . . in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”: (sprinkling for baptism, baptism of infants, human creeds, instruments of music, denominational organization with human heads [Pope, president, chairmen, etc.]).

Where are we going? Better, *where are you going?* Are we content to just abide in the things that Jesus said, giving book, chapter, and verse for our convictions? Do we need a new standard of authority? What happened to the authority of the word?

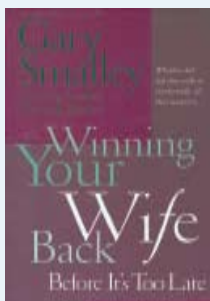
Silence may be golden, or it may be a “rejection of the authority of God.” We must teach the will of God. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21). Several of these words are worthy of deeper study, viz., hatred, variance, emulations (jealousies), strife (plural in original, translated *factions* (*Pulpit Commentary*, XX:256), seditions (divisions, schisms), heresies (sometimes means sect, or a school of thought) . . . and such like.

Brethren, *we have troubles!* The solution is to simply return to the Christ who saves and to abide in his adequate word. “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Amen! (Rom. 6:22-23).

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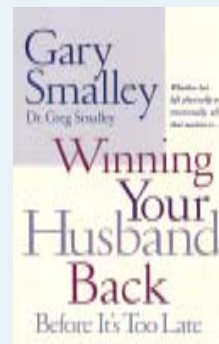
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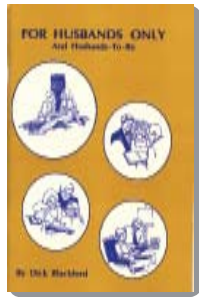
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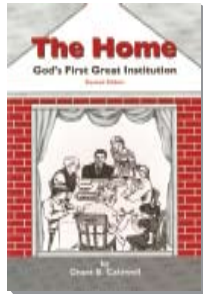
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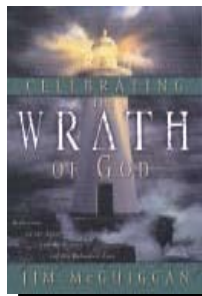
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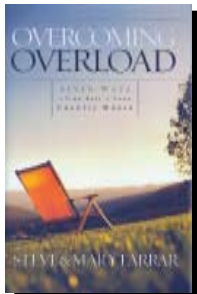


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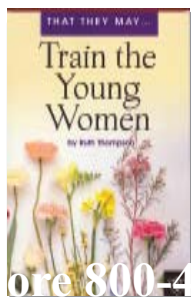
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# Needful Preaching

Aaron Erhardt

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The life of Paul stands as a blueprint for gospel preachers. He not only wrote that we are to “preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine,” he lived it every day! Paul set the example for those who do the work of an evangelist. Therefore, I would like for us to observe one important lesson from the preaching of Paul.

While in custody at Caesarea, Paul was visited by Felix, the procurator of Judea, and his wife Drusilla. The Bible says, “And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:24-25). Felix was a very powerful person. He had the authority to release Paul or to have him executed. Yet Paul preached a sermon to the procurator that was “terrifying” (ASV).

Now why did Paul preach on righteousness, temperance (or self-control), and judgment to come? Have you ever thought about it? What was he thinking? Paul preached on those things because they were exactly what Felix needed to hear! According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, Felix had no right to Drusilla. They were living in an adulterous relationship. He records, “While Felix was procurator of Judea, he saw Drusilla, and fell in love with her; for she did indeed exceed all other women in beauty, and he sent to her a person whose name was Simon, one of his friends; a Jew he was, and by birth a Cypriot, and one who pretended to be a magician; and he endeavored to persuade her to forsake her present husband, and marry him; and promised, that if she would not refuse him, he would make her a happy woman” (*The Works of Josephus* 533, 534). Paul preached what was *needed!*

When Paul traveled to Athens and other cities filled with idolatry he preached on the one true living God. Were they ear tickling sermons? No. Did his messages win him any popularity contests? Absolutely not. In fact, the craftsmen at Ephesus, who made their livelihood in idolatry, enraged the community to riot against Paul (Acts 19:23-41). Yet he

never wavered in his preaching because it was what they needed to hear!

Can you imagine standing before former President Bill Clinton with an opportunity to preach the gospel? What would you say? Would you seek to impress the President? Would you avoid all issues of controversy? Think about it. Would you have the courage to speak on needful things (i.e., abortion, fornication, adultery, lying, homosexuality, the necessity of baptism, the one true church) to the President? I think it is safe to say Paul would.

We need men in the pulpit today who will call sin “sin.” We need preachers who will preach against abortion, homosexuality, immodesty, drunkenness, divorce, and denominationalism. We need preachers with the courage and conviction to oppose even brethren who “bring in damnable heresies” and “overthrow the faith of some.” Just because a man has been baptized in water and calls himself a gospel preacher does not give him a “license to mislead.” We need preachers who will oppose such men.

We need men who will preach on the one true church. Too many among us act as if they are ashamed of the church and its distinctive nature. They say we need to “preach more Christ, and less church.” How can that be done? How can you preach the king and not the kingdom? How can you preach the groom and not the bride? How can you preach the foundation and not the house? How can you preach the Savior and not the saved? How can you preach the head and not the body? Such is an impossible task. For instance, Saul was said to have persecuted the church (Gal. 1:13). Yet the Lord asked, “Why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4). Therefore, we must conclude that to persecute the church is to persecute Christ himself! Furthermore, when Philip went to Samaria, the Bible says he “preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5). We then see that he was preaching about the kingdom (v. 12). How much clearer must it be? The church is “the fullness of him” (Eph. 1:23)! We need preachers who will speak out and tell folks about the one true church of our Lord.

This is not to say that preachers should be rude or im-

# A Great Society?

Steven F. Deaton

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Is our society that great? Yes, we enjoy a tremendous amount of prosperity and freedom, much of which we can be thankful. However, it has reached the point that these are often a detriment to our society. Notice some of the things we financially can afford and legally “enjoy.”

- Abortion
- Divorce-at-will
- Pornography
- Britney-Spears-apparel (hooker clothes)
- Strip clubs
- “Spas” (whore houses)
- Gambling
- Alcohol
- Homosexuality
- Same-sex “marriage”

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34).

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polite. Such behavior is counterproductive to the cause of Christ. We are told to “preach the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). However, there is no excuse for preachers to avoid issues of importance just because it might offend or upset someone in the pew. Tell them what they *need* to hear!

Sadly, many preachers nowadays deliver sermons that are strictly positive in nature. They are men-pleasers who seek to “dazzle” the congregation with entertaining presentations rather than to convict the sinner of his sins. Such dazzling performances was not the concern of Paul (2 Cor. 4:5). He did not fill his lessons with irrelevant stories and pointless anecdotes intended to impress the audience. He was interested only in preaching the unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ. Would Paul’s bold preaching be welcomed where you worship?

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It is amazing that so many people do not realize the deterioration of values and morals and subsequent devastation. It is like falling off a cliff. Diving downward is not so bad; it is the thud at the end that causes the problem. People look around and see others hurling down at the same speed, thinking “everything is okay.” It’s not. At some point our society will hit “rock bottom” with an enormous thud from which there will be no recovery. Sodom and Gomorrah hit it. Israel did too. Assyria, Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece, Rome — all reached a point when God said, “No more!” His divine wrath brought these nations to an end — FOREVER! We will experience the same end.

Can’t we stop it? No. The die is cast. So, do we give up? No. We preach the gospel even though it is unpopular (2 Tim. 4:2). We live righteously, acting as salt and light (1 Pet. 2:11-12; Matt. 5:13-16). We do this with fervent prayer for those in government and those who labor for the Lord (1 Tim. 2:1-4; 2 Thess. 3:1, 2). In so doing, we will help redeem the remnant, the few precious souls willing to walk the straight and narrow (Matt. 7:13-14).

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## The Dragon Slayer

Reflections on the Saving of the World

by Jim McGuiggan

There were those who would apologize for the doctrine of the cross but Paul wasn’t one of them. He said, “We preach Christ crucified” — we don’t whisper it. “We preach Christ crucified,” said J.H. Jowett, “we don’t timidly submit it for subdued discussion in the academic grove; we don’t offer it to the hands of exclusive circles — we preach it, we stand out like the town-crier in the public way, and we proclaim it to the common and indiscriminate crowd.” 202 pages.



# Methodists “Decry Lesbian Pastor’s Acquittal”

Larry Ray Hafley

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So said the headline in the *Houston Chronicle* (3/26/04), 10A.

The pastors of about a dozen major United Methodist churches in the area will denounce last week’s church acquittal of a lesbian minister from their pulpits Sunday and are urging other Texas pastors to join them.

The denomination has been in an uproar since the Rev. Karen Dammann was acquitted Saturday by a church court in Washington state although she acknowledged being in a lesbian relationship. Church law bans “self-avowed, practicing homosexuals” in the ministry.

... “The position of the United Methodist Church has not changed. . . . We continue to believe that the practice of homosexuality is not the expressed will of God.”

## Comments

First, we are happy to hear that the Methodists are “in an uproar” about something. They generally are rather a staid, unflappable sort. Even their creed book, the *Methodist Discipline*, gives one the choice of either sprinkling, pouring, or immersion for baptism. It matters not (ho-hum, yawn, stretch) what the Bible pattern might be. Just take your pick. Or, you may choose not to be baptized at all since Article IX says that justification before God is “by faith only,” thus rendering baptism unnecessary.

Second, it is strange that the Methodists are upset about the lady lesbian. (How is that for a contradiction in terms?!) The same Bible which condemns her homosexual relationship as sin also says that women cannot be pastors in the church of the Lord, and that, even if they could, they could not address the congregation as a preacher does (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 14:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:12; 3:1, 2; 1 Pet. 5:2). Since they ignored, set aside, and/or changed the will of God with respect to allowing a woman to be a pastor, why should they think it strange that some of their brethren want to ignore, set aside, and/or change God’s law with respect to homosexuality?

Third, our Methodist friends might as well get set to be labeled as “homophobes.” It is sure to happen. When they are so charged, perhaps they could ask if those who support the homosexual pastoree, but who would oppose a pedophile pastor are “pedophilophobes”? Calling names may be childish at times, but in this case it may help to keep things in perspective, for if opposition to homosexual behavior makes me a “homophobe,” your opposition to pedophiles would make you a “pedophilophobe.”

Fourth, note that these Methodist denouncers “are urging other Texas pastors to join them.” “I think across the conference there will be a number of churches who will eagerly embrace this” (the call to denounce the acquittal), said the Rev. Edmund Robb, pastor of the Woodlands United Methodist Church.” I wonder if some Christians might say that such a call for support is “a violation of church autonomy”? Of course, when they do so, they are guilty of binding the doctrine of local church autonomy on others and of forcing them to abide by it. It seems never to occur to such brethren that when they bind and control and issue edicts to others based on the doctrine of independent, local church government, that they are violating their own rule.

Fifth, the Methodists who are in an uproar had better get ready to face ostracism if not expulsion. “The powers that be” in the Methodist hierarchy “are not ordained by God.” Their offices and powers are not derived from above, nor by the consent of the governed. Hence, they are free to make and to undo their laws as times and circumstances designate. Despite what the Bible teaches, when it became politically acceptable to receive women as pastors, presto, women became pastors. They became such over the same strenuous objections as are being made against lesbian pastors. Likewise, no matter what the Bible teaches, since it is politically correct to accept lesbian pastors, lesbian pastors are here to stay.

Sixth, the objectors and dissidents will be castigated as divisive, unloving Pharisees. They will be denied and vilified as not being “inclusive.” They will be charged

## “Boasting” continued from front page

“vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up” (1 Cor. 13:4). Love is not a braggart, nor does it have an inflated appraisal of its own importance. “For if a man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Gal. 6:3).

We are to do nothing through vainglory (Phil. 2:3), nor desire it (Gal. 5:26). Such arrogant boasting is empty, of no value. “The man who bragged that he was self-made, loved to worship his creator.”

Men boast to obtain favor for their own profit. False teachers spoke great swelling words “for the sake of advantage.” They desired to seduce others to follow them in their ungodly ways (Jude 16). “For when they speak great swellings words of vanity, they allure through the lust of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error” (2 Pet. 2:18). They use the sinful desires of the flesh to capture those who had escaped from those things. We need to beware of those who would make merchandise of us.

Men boast of tomorrow. “Come now, ye that say, today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain” (Jas. 4:13). “You rejoice in your boasting: all such rejoicing is evil” (v. 16). “For that you ought to say if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (v. 15). We can make plans for the future, but we don’t have the ability to bring them to fruition. Things can happen beyond our control, which can affect our plans.

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with being contrary to the spirit of Christ. “Christ,” their opponents will say, “received everyone, even the publicans and sinners, and he would receive the homosexuals if he were here today. So, you that are objecting and denouncing others are propagating hatred rather than the love of Jesus.” The denouncers are about to sample the “love” that those who oppose them will dish out against them. It will not be a pretty sight.

Finally, what can they do? They can open their eyes and be turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God, from the Methodist kingdom of this world to the kingdom of Christ (Acts 26:16-18; Col. 1:13). In short, they can deny and denounce the corruption of the Methodist church as well as the corruption that is the world through lust, and they can obey the gospel of Christ (1 Pet. 1:22-25; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4). Let us who are of the truth and in the truth take it to those soon to be crushed and disillusioned souls who may be ready to hear.

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We live and move within the providence of God. We don’t know what shall be on the morrow. “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1).

Faith in Christ excludes boasting of self. The Jews made boast of the law while breaking it (Rom. 2:23). They sought glory before God, but relied upon self. They relied on their works for righteousness and justification. We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ (Rom. 3:24). “Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith” (v. 27). We are saved by the grace of God. “Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:9). Faith implies the surrender of all self-glorying. We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3). Our glorying is in the Lord (2 Cor. 10:17). When we have done all of those things that are commanded, we can say we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do (Luke 17:10).

Did Paul sin when he boasted of not taking financial support from the Corinthians? Did he contradict his teaching when he boasted of his sufferings for Christ? He said, “I robbed other churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you. . . . I was not a burden on any man . . . no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia” (2 Cor. 11:8-10). In speaking of the things he suffered as an apostle, he said, “Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also” (v. 18). He thought it foolish and didn’t feel comfortable, but he was compelled to do it. He had to do it to authenticate his apostleship. This glorying (boasting) doesn’t come from a self-glorying of a self-established man. Boasting is not for his cause. He was forced to boast because of the cause of Christ. Yet he boasted of his weakness, not of his strength. Paul recognized Christ was working through him. His glorying was through Christ Jesus (Rom. 15:17). By the grace of God he became an apostle. He could say, “I labored more abundantly than they all; yet, not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor. 15:10). Paul’s boasting was in the Lord: “But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (2 Cor. 10:17). Paul would never boast of self for the sake of self. “But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).

We may boast of God’s power, wisdom, his perfection, his redemptive work, etc., but not to “toot our own horn.” “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake” (2 Cor. 4:5).

**Renew Promptly!**

## “Filthy Speech” continued from page 2

a happy and gracious ‘flexibility. In the next century Aristotle used it of ‘versatility’ in the give and take of social intercourse, quick repartee. In the sixth century B.C., the poet Pindar speaks of one Jason as never using a word of ‘vain lightness,’ a meaning approaching to its latest use. Its meaning certainly deteriorated, and it came to denote coarse jesting, ribaldry, as in Eph. 5:4, where it follows *morologia*, foolish talking” (II:274). Thayer says it comes from a word that denotes “easily turning; nimble-witted, witty, sharp” and then says, “in a bad sense, scurrility, ribaldry, low jesting” (263). Webster says of “ribald”: “low coarse, or scurrilous; esp., coarsely offensive in language” (*New Collegiate Dictionary* 728). *The American Heritage Dictionary* says of “ribald”: “pertaining to or indulging in vulgar, lewd humor” (1061). The word “vulgar” basically means the common people or the great masses of people. Thus, the vernacular language of a people. The Latin Vulgate translation of Scripture was one for the common man. *The American Heritage Dictionary* gives “4. Obscene or indecent; lewd; a vulgar joke” (1356). It is in this later sense that we use the word in this article. *The American Heritage Dictionary* says of “scurrility” “given to the use of vulgar or low abusive language; foul-mouthed” (1104).

Some of the vulgar words are what are commonly called “four letter words.” Only some are not words; they are acronyms. Acronyms are “formed from the initial letters or syllables of the successive parts of a compound term” (Webster 9). One of the most common “four letter words” is not actually a word but an acronym that stands for “fornicating under the crown of the king.” Used for that which is illegal and immoral, it has been made into that which is used by a lot of people who do not know any better. However, many who use it do not understand the acronym.

As in Paul’s day, there are those who can and will turn every statement into something ugly, vile, vulgar, and dirty. They can turn innocent comments, remarks, or words into something that is vulgar, suggestive, and crude with the twist of a word or an inference, which the speaker never had in mind. If reproved, they seem innocent and charge the one who reproves them with having a dirty mind. Such language is not only not nice in decent company, but is also condemned by the Holy Spirit. With some there is no line beyond which they will not go in their use of language. Their language is coarse, crude, and vulgar. Some individuals seem not to be able to communicate in any language except this kind. Their entire speech is laced with such language. Such vulgar speech indicates that the speaker is not sufficiently educated to communicate with others in clean, decent speech. The Christian does not use such language. He knows that he will give an account for his speech (Matt. 12:36-37).

Some publications are well known for their filthy language. Books are often filled with such on nearly every

page. Magazines often have such language upon their pages. You and I live in a world where we do not have control over what is published, but we do not have to purchase such and take it home and spend our time reading such. How could a person be uplifted morally, edified spiritually, and made a better person by reading such filth?

Some movies are well known for their filthy language. Movies have changed drastically over the last several years. Some readers are old enough to remember Clark Gable uttering one word in “Gone with the Wind” and all the commotion that it caused. Now look at the language used in the movies. It is almost impossible to find a movie today that is not filled with filthy speech. The sad thing is that a number of people who call themselves Christians go to see such, rent them and bring them into their homes to view with their family. What are children to think when parents watch such? If they register a protest to such, what good does that do if they continue to watch those kind of films?

Some TV and radio programs are known for their filthy language. Words like “hell” and “damn” which only preachers were permitted to use in preaching on the radio a few years ago because they were words found within the Bible, are mild in comparison to what is said on some programs today. I have known of people being cut off the air for saying filthy words in years gone by. Today, hardly anything said causes people to be cut off the air.

Some entertainers are well known for their filthy language. When they are on radio or TV they hold to some extent the words they use. However, when they perform in clubs or in videos they have no limit to which they will not go using every filthy word known. No Christian should be found in such clubs or listening to such videos.

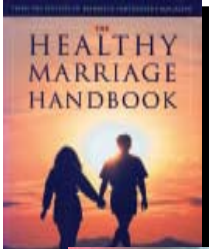
Some music uses filthy language. Many songs not only use filthy language, but are about vulgar and indecent circumstances. Parents would do well to listen to what their children listen. They might get the shock of their lives to learn what their children are hearing. When parents wonder why their children are acting the way they are, the answer could well be in the influence of the music to which they are listening. Children cannot listen to filthy, vulgar, suggestive music and not be affected by it in time. Such does not edify the child and build him up morally, spiritually, or socially.

Of such language, the Apostle Paul said, “Let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Eph. 5:3).

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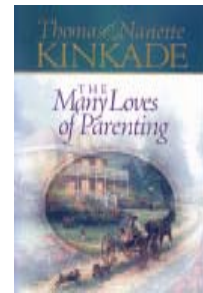


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