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(unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp)



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Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER
THINGS**

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

are of good report

IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF THERE
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

Jesus so came, so lived, and so taught that those who hunger for godliness are drawn to him and enlightened by him, while those who despise the grace and love of God are repelled and blinded.
(J.W. McGarvey, **Fourfold Gospel**. 618)

Wealth, pleasure, fame, the three idols which the people of this world adore, are all to endure but for a little time. They will all soon vanish away. So it is with pain, and sorrow, and tears. All that we enjoy, and all that we suffer here, must soon vanish and disappear. The most splendid palace will decay; the most costly pile will moulder to dust; the most magnificent city will fall to ruins; the most exquisite earthly pleasures will soon come to an end; and the most extended possessions can be enjoyed but a little time. So the acutest pain will soon be over; the most lingering disease will soon cease; the evils of the deepest poverty, want, and suffering will soon be passed. There is nothing on which the eye can fix, nothing that the heart can desire here, which will not soon fade away; or, if it survives, it is temporary in regard to us. We must soon leave it to others; and if enjoyed, it will be enjoyed while our bodies are slumbering in the grave, and our souls engaged in the deep solemnities of eternity. How foolish then to make these our portion, and to fix our affections supremely on the things of this life? How foolish also to be very deeply affected by the trials of this life, which at the furthest can be endured but a little longer before we shall be forever beyond

their reach!

(Albert Barnes, **Notes on Second Corinthians**, comments on 2 Corinthians 4:18)

Faith from the Heart

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

In the African nation of Uganda, many Christians are unemployed, and those who have jobs earn as little as \$1 a day.

When Hurricane Ike struck the Texas coast Sept. 13, the Mbarara church wanted to help the church in Houston that was supporting their preacher. A certain Sunday was set aside for the total contribution to go towards this effort. The church's average contribution is about \$11 per Sunday.

The church's 50 members that Sunday gave 36,250 Ugandan Shillings. That is \$21.96 U.S. Evidently, the widow that gave the two mites (Mark 12:42) still lives.

A Conversation with a Rabbi

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

As the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah approached, the Atlanta Journal ran a story, focusing on its observance by a Chabad-Lubavitch sect of the Hasidic movement. This is an ultra-conservative denomination in Judaism. I wrote a letter to the young rabbi mentioned in the article, and from that was able to set up a meeting with Ruvi New.

From the first, it was evident that he desired no sort of discussion. In fact, during our conversation, I recall that he only asked one question: "What can I do for you?" I explained my desire to know more about his faith, so that I could better understand if for myself, and better answer other's questions. He admitted that he had never read the New Testament, and had never considered the evidence of Christ's claims to be the Son of God.

This particular sect began in Lubavitch, Russia, as a pietist movement coming out of Eastern Europe in the late 1700s. Hasidic Jews wear the beards, black hats and clothing that are seen in the news from time to time. They tend to live in close-knit neighborhoods, as they cannot drive on the Sabbath, but must walk to their synagogues for worship.

At the time of our conversation, they strongly believed that their rabbi Manachem Schneerson was the Messiah, and that he would soon reveal himself to be so. This gentleman, or rebbe, as he was designated, was in his 90s, and at the time of our conversation (January, 1994) was quite ill following a stroke. When I asked about his qualifications in light of the Old Testament prophecies, particularly Isaiah 53, I was informed that he met the criteria, including suffering, "for he is suffering now in his illness," for the sins of the world. (I wasn't real sure about that.) According to Ruvi New, two things are necessary for the revealing of the Messiah. First, the temple must be rebuilt in Jerusalem, and second, there must be enough good deeds by faithful Jews to usher in his coming. New told me that they pray 60 times a day for his coming, and that as the Jews do more and more good deeds, this will hasten his coming.

I inquired about the priesthood, and was informed that they do have priests, whose roles are largely ceremonial, since there is no temple where sacrifices could be offered. Mr. New said that among the Jews, the genealogical records had been kept, even after Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70, and thus a few could trace their lineage from Levi. Schneerson was said to be of the tribe of Judah through David. It was interesting to hear that they do not believe in the necessity of a virgin birth, for the Messiah is to be just a man, although a righteous and scholarly man. The Messiah is likened to Moses, for they believe there is a Moses in every generation. When the Messiah is revealed, the Jews will return to Israel, and from

Jerusalem the King will rule over the earth forever.

This sect reminds us of the Pharisees in their strict observance of the Law. At exactly 18 minutes before Friday's sunset, Mrs. New lights the Shabbat, or Sabbath candles in preparation for dinner, but the dishes remain unwashed until sundown Saturday. They will not turn on a light or use hot water on the Sabbath, for they say this kindles a "fire," which is forbidden. (When the contacts in the light switch connect, it creates a spark, which they say is a fire.) They will even unscrew the light bulb in the refrigerator so it will not come on when they open the door. As to other lights in the house, they will either leave them on during the Sabbath, or if they have non-Jewish servants, they can operate the light switches.

In a 24-page booklet Mr. New gave me, the Jewish scholar Maimonides is quoted: "Whoever does not believe in (Moshiach) (Messiah—jdt) and does not anxiously anticipate his coming, but also the Torah and Moses..."

But He has come, and is coming again! His name is Jesus Christ, and the proof of his identity is solid and cannot be disproven.

Christ In Prophecy

C.G. "Colly" Caldwell | Temple Terrace, Florida, USA

One of the strongest evidences supporting the Bible is the fulfillment of prophecy by Jesus Christ. The Old Testament was completed in the fifth century B.C. Malachi is usually dated between 444 and 432 B.C. and it is the final message of God until John the Baptist came preaching in preparation for Christ (Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 3:1-17). If all specific historical predictions made about Christ are exactly fulfilled, if they were made over four-hundred years before His birth, and if there were many such predictions, we are forced to accept that evidence as conclusive proof.

The Bible, of course, presents its prophecies as evidence that it is true. God promised Adam that He would send One who would bruise the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15). God promised Abraham that He would make a great nation out of his family and that out of that nation would come the Messiah (Genesis 12:3). When David was king, God promised him that out of his seed would come the Messiah (2 Samuel 7:12-13). Jesus claimed to fulfill those prophecies (John 5:39,46; Luke 24:44-45). The Apostles also preached that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of a coming Messiah (Acts 3:18,21,24; 10:43; 13:27; 17:2-3).

In 1884, Harvey W. Everest published a book entitled *The Divine Demonstration* (St. Louis, MO: Christian Publishing Company). In it Everest presented a wonderful chapter on "Messianic Prophecies." The heading of the chapter said, "The writers of the Bible left on record a long line of prophecies concerning the Messiah and his kingdom which find exact fulfillment in Jesus and his religion." After three preliminary points (1. The Eternal Purpose of God; (2. The Divine Promise of a Messiah; and (3. The Prophecy and Fulfillment Presented in Types and Antitypes), Everest presents ten categories of Jesus' life which were prophesied in the Old Testament:

"IV. The Time of the Messiah's coming was clearly foretold" (page 318-320). Jesus would come in the "last days" (Isaiah 2:2; Joel 2:28; Daniel 2:28) before the people of Judah would cease to be a distinct nation of people (Genesis 49:10). The last days are the gospel age (Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-3). Daniel also said that the kingdom would be established in the days of a fourth world empire (Daniel 2:31-45). That empire was the Roman empire (Luke. 2:1; 3:1). Paul told the Galatians that all this occurred in the "fulness of time" (Galatians 4:4).

"V. The place of the Messiah's nativity was a matter of prophecy" (page 321). Micah foretold that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Bethlehem was just a little town south of Jerusalem. Unless God had told him long before, there was no way for Micah to know (or even guess) what would otherwise be trivia about Jesus' life (Matthew 2:1).

"VI. The lineage of the Messiah was declared in the Jewish Scriptures" (pages 321-322). His human

lineage was to be from woman (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Galatians 4:4; Matthew 1:18-21) and His divine lineage from God (Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:23). He was to come from the family of Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; Galatians 3:8-16; 4:4); from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10); and from the house of David (2 Samuel 7:12-13; 23:1-7; Isaiah 11:1,2,11; Acts 13:22-23).

“VII. The Messiah was also to partake of the divine nature” (pages 322-323). Zechariah spoke for God in calling Him “my fellow” (Zechariah 13:7). He would be eternal (Micah 5:2). He was called the Son of God, signifying that He was of the same nature as the Father (Psalm 2:7; Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Hebrews 1:6-8). He was therefore equal with God in basic nature (Philippians 2:6; John 10:30).

“VIII. The character of Messiah was minutely described by the prophets” (pages 323-326). The prophets describe:

- a. “his wisdom” (Isaiah 11:1-4);
- b. “his obedience” (Deuteronomy 18:18; John 6:38; 12:49; 15:15; Luke 22:42; Hebrews 5:7-9);
- c. “his love of righteousness” (Psalm 45:7);
- d. “his gentleness and tenderness” (Isaiah 42:1-4);
- e. “his compassion” (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:21); and
- f. “his piety” (Psalm 40:7-8; Hebrews 10:7).

“IX. The main events in the life of Jesus were minutely and accurately predicated” (pages 326-330). The prophets predicted the following events which exactly occurred as they said:

- a. “A divinely appointed harbinger was to announce the Messiah’s coming and introduce his public ministry” (Malachi 3:1; 4:5; Isaiah 40:3; Luke 1:17; Matthew 17:9-13; Mark 9:9-13). John the Baptist was the “harbinger” who prepared the way of the Lord.
- b. “The Messiah was to be anointed, or consecrated, for his threefold office of prophet, priest, and king, by the Holy Spirit” (Isaiah 42:1; 61:1; Matthew 3:16-17).
- c. “The Messiah was to enter upon his ministry in Galilee, in the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali” (Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:13-16).
- d. “The Messiah was to confirm his mission by the working of miracles, and miracles of a particular kind” (Isaiah 35:5-6).
- e. “In the words of Isaiah, chapter 53:3, the Messiah was to be ‘a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.’”
- f. “The Messiah was to enter Jerusalem in triumph” (Zechariah 9:9).
- g. “The Messiah was to be rejected by the Jewish people” (Isaiah 53:1-3; John 1:11; Matthew 27:22-23).

“X. The betrayal and trial of the Messiah” (pages 330-331). The prophets foretold thirty pieces of silver would be paid for Jesus, that he would be quiet during his affliction, and that he would suffer great abuse (Zechariah 11:12-13; Isaiah 53:7; 50:6; Matthew 27).

“XI. The crucifixion and burial” (pages 331-336). The prophets foretold that Jesus would be crucified (Psalm 22:15-18) as the result of unjust judgment (Isaiah 53:8; John 19:23-24). He would be scourged prior to his death (Isaiah 50:6). The soldiers would part his garments (Psalm 22:18). He would be numbered with transgressors (Isaiah 53:12) and would die in the midst of his enemies (Psalm 22:11). He would be cruelly mocked (Psalm 22:6-8; Matthew 27:39-44). His bones would not be broken but his side would be pierced (Psalm 34; Zechariah 12:10; Psalm 22:16; John 19:31, 34, 37). The Messiah would be buried with the wicked and with the rich in his death (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60; John 19:39-42). All these prophecies were exactly and completely fulfilled.

“XII. The resurrection, ascension and coronation of the Messiah” (pages 336-339). The prophets said that the Messiah would rise from the dead (Isaiah 53:10-11; Psalm 16:10; 2:6-7). After dwelling among men for a time, he would ascend on high (Psalm 68:18; 24:7) to be crowned with power and glory (Daniel 7:13-14; Acts 2).

“XIII. Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecies concerning the kingdom that the Christ should establish” (pages 339-345). Jesus would be a king (Psalm 2:6; 110:3) in a kingdom of peace (Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:5-6; 2:2-4). He would also hold the positions of priest (Psalm 110:4; Zechariah 6:12-13) and prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-23; Hebrews 1:1-3).

These prophecies could only be revealed by a Divine God who both knew what would happen in the future

and who had the power to guarantee that it happened. If God truly revealed these things and exercised his power to see that they were accomplished and if Jesus is truly the Messiah as these prophecies declare, then the Bible must be a special Divine revelation from God. There is no other conclusion that a thinking man can accept.

(And I add that these facts demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God. - KS)

It's Never Just Music

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

Whenever a church decides to use musical instruments in worship, they open a door to many other departures from God's will. Frankly, many compromises have already occurred to get to the instrument, but the departure is not official (in some people's minds) until the piano and guitar are brought into the building. From there, anything that meets human approval is seen as being acceptable to God, be it social, charitable or political. "As long as we acknowledge Jesus and do good in the community, we are glorifying God as a church." The line of doctrinal right and wrong then becomes as stable as a kite in the wind—changing with every generation, moving from faith to faith, flowing down the path of least resistance. And all along, God lets us choose which path we want and will even "send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

Altering God's will in worship is nothing new. People have been doing it since Cain (Genesis 4:3-7). It is the ultimate reason the nation of Israel was led into captivity. When Jeroboam, their first king, was afraid of losing the people's loyalty in going to Judah to worship (1 Kings 12:26-27), as God wanted, he set up golden calves in Israel to worship instead (verses 28-30). The people bought into his lies "hook, line, and sinker" and performed every other form of error he initiated (verses 31-33). What they failed to realize was their compromise was only a stepping stone for further apostasy (even idolatry) by future generations. For two hundred years "the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight...So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day" (2 Kings 17:21-23).

In Israel's case, it was never just the golden calves; further departure was imminent. In our case, those who dismiss God's instructions to sing in church ("speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord," Ephesians 5:19), and opt instead to sing and make melody on a device, open the door to further compromise. Future generations will not only build on that error, they will water down spirituality to that which is entertaining and carnal. Consequently, the religious community goes from gospel preaching to gimmick-promoters to get people through the doors, as they repeat an age-old problem: "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play" (1 Corinthians 10:7). But all along, God is in the background looking for people who will seek His will — knowing that "true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (John 4:23). Anything less than that only leads to more sin.

No Partiality With God

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

In Acts 10 Luke reveals to us the story about the first Gentile converts to Christ. Cornelius, who was a centurion, was instructed by the Lord to send to Joppa for Peter who would tell him what he must do to be saved (verse 6). Upon the apostle's arrival, this soldier had gathered many of his family and friends together (verse 24) to hear all the things commanded them by God (verse 33). Notice the beginning words of Peter's sermon to this audience, "Then Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him'" (verses 34-35). This is a message of hope for all people.

God shows no partiality. A.T. Robertson says, “The idea is to pay regard to one’s looks or circumstances rather than to his intrinsic character. The Jews had come to feel that they were the favourites of God and actually sons of the kingdom of heaven because they were descendants of Abraham. John the Baptist rebuked them for this fallacy” (Word Pictures in the New Testament, 3:143). God has no favorites. Salvation is offered to all regardless the color of one’s skin, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, etc. The same conditions must be met by all who want to be saved by His grace. There are no exceptions.

In every nation. This shows the extent of God’s impartiality. It does not matter which nation one is from. An individual could be from one of the most corrupt, ungodly, and immoral nations yet the Lord still wants him saved. In the giving of the great commission, His apostles were told, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19); “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Paul declared, “if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister” (Colossians 1:23). We must continue to sound forth the gospel to our family and friends, to those we come in contact with day by day, from the pulpits when we come together to worship, on the radio, in the newspaper, the internet and social media. Our aim should be to make the gospel available to all have a hunger and thirst for it.

Whoever fears Him. This clearly points out that the Lord has not already decided for you as the Calvinists teach, “whoever.” Your family may not have had any interest in spiritual matters, having refused to believe in God and His book, yet that does not have to describe you. You can fear the Lord. The word “fear” is defined as, “to reverence, venerate, to treat with deference or reverential obedience: used of his devout worshippers” (J.H. Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. 656). The one who fears the Lord is the one who will humbly submit to His commands (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Those who are truly wise fear God (Proverbs 9:10).

Works righteousness. Not only must one abstain from committing sinful acts like adultery, fornication, lying stealing, etc., yet he must do things required by God of those who are to be His disciples. The word “works” means “Figuratively, to work good or evil, to do, commit, practice” (**The Complete Word Study Dictionary**). Thayer defines the word “righteousness” as “integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting” (**Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**. 1343). It was said of Zacharias and Elizabeth, “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Luke 1:6). We must be a people of integrity, morally upright, and willing to do good to all as we have opportunity (Galatians 6:10).

Accepted by Him. A.T. Robertson says, “That is to say, a Gentile would not have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian” (**Word Pictures in the New Testament**). Any person who is willing to fear God and work righteousness the Lord is willing to accept. This audience of people to whom Peter was preaching was taught about Jesus Christ (verses 36-42), the necessity of believing in Him (verse 43), having a willingness to repent (Acts 11:18) and of being baptized in water (verse 47). They received this instruction offered by the apostle (Acts 11:1), were baptized into Christ (verse 48) and were granted spiritual life by the Father (Acts 11:18).

The Lord had accepted these Gentiles. They had been forgiven of their sins and reconciled unto Him by the blood of His Son. You too can be set free from the bondage of sin, regardless of who you are, if you will fear Him and work righteousness. The question you must answer is, “Are you willing?”

Is Islam compatible with Christianity? Pt. 1

Tommy Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

The question in the title should concern every American and even more so, all true Christians. Many seem

to have their heads in the sand when it comes to the Islamic religion. Many otherwise sincere people, ignorant of the teachings of Islam, unthinkingly join with professed Muslims, seeking to persuade us to believe that Islam is really a religion of peace. They tell us that Islam simply wants to co-exist with other religions, not as an enemy, but a friend. They say the problems are being caused by a few radical terrorists who really do not represent true Islam. But, is this true?

It seems that as the religion of Islam gains a larger foothold in America, and their leaders (many of them radical) voice their intentions to eventually change American society into an Islamic state under Sharia law, most people are not alarmed. They do not see the great danger lurking in the shadows. They may have changed their location but not their ideology. Islam is not just a religion to Muslims. It is a way of life, socially, secularly, politically as well as religiously. With this in mind I thought it good to write some articles showing that the religion of Islam is not compatible with true Christianity.

It is my conviction that we should really be aware of the religion of Islam, even if we are not being affected locally at this time. In case you don't know it, today 1.5 billion Muslims (those who adhere to Islam) make up 22% of the world's population. Even though they are still in the minority in America they are rapidly becoming more and more influential in our lives. For this reason I purpose to write some articles, showing that the religion of Islam is not compatible with true Christianity. In them I hope to reveal several differences between Islam and true Christianity.

As I begin to write on this subject I want my readers to understand I bear no animosity against Muslims as a people, or as individuals. I treat any of them I meet with respect and expect them to do the same toward me. But I am greatly concerned about the danger Islam poses as a religion. It is a false religion, and it cannot scripturally co-exist with true Christianity. I intend to point out why, but first some observations.

Muslims would have us believe they are a tolerant people, desiring only to live in peace with their neighbors. And I believe a majority of them are peaceful and satisfied with that arrangement, until Islam gains the majority. Once the religion of Islam gains the majority it will be otherwise. Anyone who is observant, soon learns that wherever Islam has gained dominance, their tolerance suddenly becomes intolerance toward anyone who has a different faith than Islam. Just look what is happening in the Middle Eastern countries today.

Most of the focus of the main stream media news is centering, at this time, on the hoard of refugees fleeing the turbulent atrocities happening in their war-torn countries. They are seeking asylum to escape the fanatical Islamic groups who are destroying anything and anyone who opposes their form of religion, which is both secular and spiritual. While the refugees seek relief and protection from the turmoil, they are at the same time bringing their religion of Islam with them. They are flooding into nearby countries by the thousands, welcome or not. Actions of past eras show what will happen. Once in the country they will settle down, but will not assimilate into the country's society. Instead they will colonize and begin trying to force the host country's society to conform to their Muslim way of life. Even though we here in America have not yet experienced the great influx the European countries are now dealing with, we may soon be doing so. We can see the things described above happening in some parts of America at the present time.

Muslim immigrants have come into America, wanting to be given a place to live so they can enjoy the benefits. But, instead of assimilating into the society around them, they demand society change its practices to conform to theirs. They don't just want freedom to practice their secular type religion; they expect everyone else to practice it also. While the majority of Muslims are not fanatical, they are like sheep. They can be easily stirred up and led by radical, intolerant leaders into doing things that are wicked.

Regardless of what some think, Islam is not a religion to be ignored. We should not underestimate its growing power. It advances by the use of force and fear, not by persuasion as Christianity does. A fellow gospel preacher, Ney Rieber, after years of research wrote a book entitled "A resource for the study of Islam." Rieber reported at the time: "There are about a billion Muslims in the world. There are 50 Muslim

majority countries in the world: 21 in Asia, 28 in Africa, and 1 in Europe. There are 13 other Muslim majority states/areas under occupation by different powers" (40). This was over 25 years ago. Today the numbers are much larger.

The religious movement known as Islam, started by a man calling himself the prophet Muhammad in Arabia ca. 622 A.D. with a handful of followers, now numbers 1.5 billion Muslims (those who adhere to Islam) in the world. This is 22% of the world's population. Wherever this religion has been established it is so deeply engrained in the lives of its members that it affects every aspect of their lives. While many in America seem to be aware of this religious movement and the part it is playing in the world community, they understand very little of the Muslim religion itself.

Morality - An Application

Chuck Richardson | Corinth, Mississippi, USA

*"So the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it'" (Genesis 4:6-7, **NKJV**).*

Morality is peculiar to man. God created us in their image; thus we are moral (Genesis 1:26,27). Since we are moral by design, the natural query is, how do we apply our morality? We do not need to examine the degree of accountability or responsibility, because inherent in our moral creation is the totality of its character. It will not do to ignore the application of our morality, nor is it wise to assume we know by nature how to apply our moral character. The danger in this approach is to assume the heinous crimes of the depraved are the only applications of morality.

Do you restrict morality to murder or despotism of the strong against the weak? Maybe you include infidelity, cheating, or lying; is this the limits of morality?

Most argue the extreme application of morality which leaves themselves and others immune from the scrutiny and indictment of immorality. We understand the gross immorality, so let us examine the extent that God judges morality, since He created us with a moral character.

Let us begin with the first violation of the moral. Adam and Eve with their moral discernment and recognition that God issued a command to not eat of the tree in the midst of the garden, quoted God exactly. (Genesis 3:2-3) Eve first was persuaded with faulty reasoning by Satan, who disguised himself as a serpent, to change her practice based upon the explicit command of God, (Genesis 3:4-6) then her husband ate, knowingly, yes willfully, he did eat. This is the foundation of the first challenge of the moral character of man. The issue seems so simple, to eat or not to eat, and the answer equally simple: God said not, for when you do you shall surely die. Yet, inherent in the simple command is the desire for the forbidden. "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6, **NKJV**). Moral courage is called to battle. The question then, is how will we respond? Moral application is our clarion call.

Know It! Giving diligence to show ourselves approved to God should be our priority (2Timothy 2:15). We are going to give an account of how we have conducted ourselves in this body (2 Corinthians 5:10). If you understand this and still want to know how to overcome immorality, then immerse yourself in the Word. When tempted, turn to God in Scripture and prayer. Have a Bible accessible at all times: do not face temptation without God. What did Jesus have in the wilderness temptations? (Matthew & Luke 4) "It is written," He said at each deceptive offer of Satan. God does not expect, nor does He want you alone with Satan.

He promised His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). Read, study, meditate on the Holy

Writ, and you will have the first step to moral application.

Cling to It! “Cling to good and abhor evil” (Romans 12:9). Paul told the Corinthians evil company corrupts good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33). God says give nothing of yourself to immorality. When evil presents itself, no matter the medium, flee it (1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22) Do as Joseph! (Genesis 39:12)

Share in It! It is vital to our moral lives to enlist the help of our brethren. To muster the moral courage and fight corruption of immorality, our companions in the battle are well equipped to help. “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26, NKJV).

We are to bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2). In fact this is the argument in verses six through ten, that we share in the riches of the promises of God, and we accomplish this by bearing one another’s burdens. Lift the faint hearted and show them the way to happiness of the moral life.

Difficulties In Church Discipline

Sean P. Cavender | Raymore, Missouri, USA

Perhaps the most difficult thing that a church will ever have to do is withdraw from a brother or sister in Christ who is in sin and refuses to repent. The apostle Paul told us to withdraw from those brethren that walk disorderly (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Paul also described it as “delivering such a one unto Satan” (1 Corinthians 5:5).

Why must the church practice this? To say “because the Bible tells us so” may be a simplistic answer (even though it is true!). However, the main purpose of church discipline and withdrawing fellowship from a brother or sister in Christ is “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:5). We must never forget this. Church discipline should not be carried out because we do not like someone. Church discipline should not be carried out with a “holier than thou” attitude. Church discipline should not be withheld from someone because of favoritism or fear of upsetting friends or family.

Church discipline is a necessity in the Lord’s church. Indeed, it is sad. However, ignoring this duty will result in even further departures from the truth. How do we manage our relationships with those from whom we have withdrawn our fellowship?

Know they are still your brother or sister in Christ. “Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother,” (2 Thessalonians 3:15). Remember they are still your brother or sister in Christ. They have sinned and they have refused to repent. Therefore, they need to be admonished – not completely ignored. The kind of admonishment that is needed is not just “get them back in church.” The sort of admonishment that they need to hear is the message to repent! We have a responsibility to help them see the error of their way and the need to obey God and serve the Lord.

Even though they are our brother or sister in Christ, the relationship has changed due to their sin, rebellious attitude and failure to repent. “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat” (1 Corinthians 5:11). The point Paul is making is very clear: the sin of our brethren creates a void and dissonance in the relationship with them. Many become reluctant to practice discipline because we fear it might run someone off. What we fail to recognize is that these folks have forsaken God and many times the church. They have ruined the relationship; our actions will not destroy a relationship that is already in a state of ruin.

Another aspect of our obligation to the erring is we must understand our responsibilities towards a brother or sister in Christ that has been withdrawn from the fellowship of the church.

While we have considered the need for real separation in our relationships with those brethren in sin, there is a strong temptation to keep the relationship intact (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:11). Too often we want to hang on to the relationships that we have formed rather than rebuke someone's sin and admonish them to repent. We think maintaining that relationship will encourage them to come back to church. Our ultimate goal should be to restore their soul in the spirit of meekness and gentleness (Galatians 6:1). The relationship is broken; we have an obligation to fix it. The entire purpose of church discipline is practiced to save the person that is in sin. "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," (1 Corinthians 5:5).

Sometimes churches practice discipline out of a spirit of animosity. Sometimes church discipline is practiced due to obligation, rather than genuine concern for the soul. That, I'm convinced, is why many Christians will continue to hang on to the relationships rather than actually separate themselves from erring brethren. They only view church discipline as a ritual of the church that will stay at the church building and have no bearing on life outside of the walls of the meeting house. Sadly, many are not fully convinced in our minds and hearts that church discipline will work.

The spirit behind church discipline should be out of genuine love and concern for truth and the desire to have a brother or sister repent. Many do not believe church discipline will work. Too many fear that once we withdraw from a brother or sister that has committed sin and has refused to repent then we will have run them off for good.

Consider the example of the church at Corinth. A man was committing fornication (1 Corinthians 5:1). Paul told the church to "not keep company" with that man and "put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Corinthians 5:11, 13). What happened next?

That man repented of the wicked sin he was ensnared in! Paul wrote a second epistle speaking of the punishment that was inflicted upon the man in sin (2 Corinthians 2:6). Paul said to forgive him (2 Corinthians 2:7). Why was the church to forgive him? It is rather obvious – it is because he repented (2 Corinthians 7:10; cf. Luke 17:3). "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). When sin is committed – rebuke the sin, encourage repentance and when repentance occurs, forgive.

We have certain duties and responsibilities that we must fulfill when we have brethren that fall into sin. The ultimate desire behind every action we might do is to restore fellowship between them and God, and us as brethren. We may overcome some of these difficulties in discipline and we can do what is right, faithfully serving the Lord.

Gideon's Blessed Assurance

Tanner Campbell | Rapid City, South Dakota, USA

Many examples of faith can be found in the bible. Usually, these examples are of men and women who, quite honestly, put us to shame by their inspiring wholehearted trust in God, and the tremendous things God accomplished through them because of their faith. The example of the man Gideon, however, is an especially unique example of faith in God, and one that is very relatable for us all. Gideon was a man who needed an extra boost in confidence from God. Sometimes he needed multiple boosts. Sometimes it was he who requested the additional assurance from God; while other times God offered the additional boost of confidence without a request from Gideon. What a wonderful God to serve! One who loves us even though we are frail in mind. One who understands the weaknesses we have and aids us in becoming stronger. Gideon's life is a great example of this fact. Let's notice a few points from the life of Gideon.

The narrative of Gideon is found in Judges chapters six through eight. Due to the disobedient state that Israel was in at that time, God brought them under the oppression of the Midianites as punishment. Israel

spent the next seven years tormented by the Midianites. During this time, the Israelites became a society of cave dwellers in an attempt to secure themselves away from the Midianites. Israel became a nation of great poverty, having their land, crops, and livestock destroyed by the Midianites. So after seven years Israel had learned its lesson and turned to God for their salvation. In response God called upon a man named Gideon to be a mighty man of valor and lead Israel toward the defeat of the Midianites.

When we first meet Gideon, he is not, however, a mighty man of valor, nor is he the great man of faith that we hear about in Hebrews 11:32. What we see is a man living in fear of the Midianites, hiding food from them. What we see is a man without faith in God, saying "if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." When God called Gideon to be His vessel, Gideon did not believe Him at first, wanting proof that it really was God who was saying these things. Now, many may stop here and say "how dare this man!" But God does not seem to think this way; instead God gave him exactly the proof that he asked for. This gave Gideon the faith to tear down the altar to Baal and build an altar to the Lord. He also had enough faith to sacrifice one of his family's bulls, which is a challenging request from God in the midst of great poverty. Notice that the scriptures give insight into the faith of Gideon at this time, saying that he did all of the above at night for fear of his family and fear of the men of the city. He is not a man mighty in faith yet, he doesn't act in inspiring courage like we see exemplified in other men of faith in the bible. But what we do see is a better man than yesterday. What we see is a man who was without faith in God, but now is acting entirely by faith in God, even though he could be stronger in it.

What we are witnessing in Gideon's life is a process of growth; we can't get to point "c" without starting at point "a" and passing through point "b." We can't expect otherwise from Gideon, ourselves, or members of the church. This does not mean we are at liberty to stop growing, this means we must be understanding toward the process of growth and the time that it takes. God illustrates to us his patience with Gideon throughout his dealing with him. God didn't expect a mighty man of valor overnight; rather he brought Gideon along one step at a time until He made a faithful warrior out of him.

Now that Gideon is primed and ready to be a great warrior, he begins to build his army, joining the Abiezrites with the men of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. While Gideon prepares for war, the enemy awaits in the Valley of Jezreel. Even though Gideon has a great many behind him, he still lacks faith in accomplishing what God told him that He would do. Therefore, Gideon asks for a sign from God. This is the second time that he requests a sign, except this time he asks for a specific sign of his choosing from God. Once again, God performs the sign of Gideon's choosing. While I am sure that this increased the courage of Gideon, he still had not the faith he needed to go into battle. So for the third time, Gideon asks for another sign of which he specifies the details. Notice this time, that Gideon is concerned with the Lord being angry with his lack of faith, as he says: "do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more" It is possibly the opinion of us all that Gideon is overstepping his limits. Even Gideon seems to be of that opinion as well. Nevertheless, Gideon has real problems with his faith, and God, without a word, once again gives Gideon the sign that he asked for.

The next phase of the narrative is God minimizing Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300. The reason for this, according to the Lord, "lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'" Certainly this also had an affect on the leader of this army, Gideon. Surely, even after receiving the signs from God, it would be an additional source of comfort to Gideon to see 32,000 men behind him, but now, Gideon sees only 300. The progress that Gideon has made in his faith toward God is put to the test as any faith that he might have had in the strength of men is diminished. However, God isn't done with helping Gideon to be a man of great faith.

Gideon now must accomplish a job with 300 when he probably wasn't fully satisfied with doing it with 32,000. I can only speculate as to that point, but you compare an army of 135,000 to an army of 32,000. The odds never seemed good to begin with. Now compare 135,000 to 300 men. Who will be the victor?

Now I certainly haven't factored God into the equations above, but if Gideon is anything like you and me, we tend to allow the things we see before our eyes to affect our faith in God. We worry about what we see on the news, or what's happening at work, instead of not letting it phase us, trusting that God's will be done in all things.

What happens next is really interesting. Gideon does not ask for a sign, nor does God freely give him a sign. However, what God does give him is a choice. God said to Gideon "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." And Gideon took this opportunity to strengthen his faith in God. When he went down to the camp, he overheard the enemy discussing a dream, in which a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed. Then it was said, "This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp." Now Gideon had both heard and seen enough from God, and he was convinced that his 300 would be victorious over an army "as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude."

What we've witnessed in this fascinating narrative is a man with struggles and weaknesses in his faith. What we've seen is a man who is probably fairly similar to you and me, at the very least during some points in our lives. However, that is not all that we've witnessed; we also saw a God who actively won the trust of a worried and fearful man. The great man of faith that we hear about in Hebrews eleven was molded by God. God led the hand of a man with many weaknesses to victory. But isn't that what He does with all His saints? Can our faith be anything without what He has shown to us and proven to us, especially through His word? Has every increase of our faith in Him been the result of God proving something to us, whether through His word, or maybe even through life experiences? None of us are unlike Gideon; we were allied by the hand in the process of growth. It's only a matter of recognizing this truth and giving thanks to the God who led us.

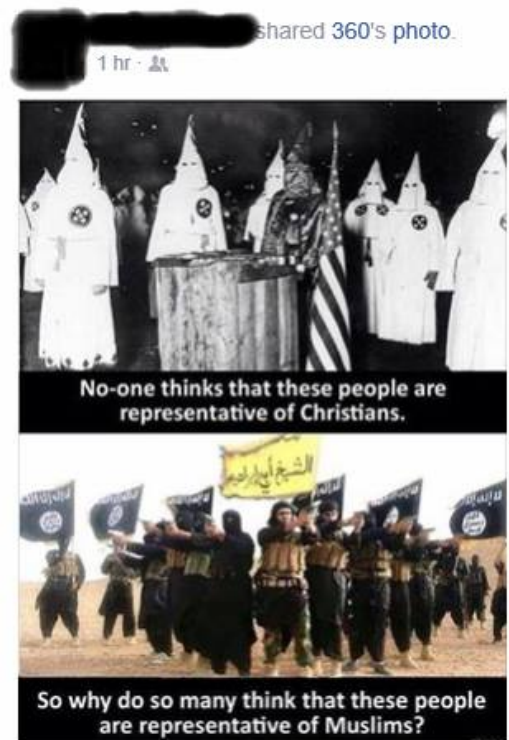
Islam & Violence

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

If you are on Facebook, it is likely that you have seen the photo to the right posted by someone at some point. Sadly, many have bought into the lie that "radical Islam" is not true Islam. In fact, I've heard some Christians defend Islam; not as a truthful religion, but affirming that the actions of "radicals" are not indicative of the religion itself.

The Bible does not command or permit Christians to do harm to another because they have a different skin colour. Acts 17:26 says, "...He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on the face of the earth..." This is a statement against racism. We are all from one blood, every human is part of the human race. Christianity does not allow for division based upon skin colour, ethnicity, social class, gender, etc.. One cannot espouse KKK ideology and be a Christian, for racism is contrary to the doctrine of Christ.

However, "radical Muslims" do what they do because of what Muhammad did and what the Qur'an commands. Muhammad claimed,



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"I have been ordered to fight against the people until they testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah's apostle..."
(Bukhari 4:196)

And many texts from the Qur'an confirm this same mission for all who serve Allah:

"The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be imprisoned; this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement." (Surah 5:33)

"I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them." (Surah 8:12)

"Tell the unbelievers that if they abandon their ways He will forgive them what is past, but if they return, that was indeed the way of their forefathers who have passed away. Fight them until persecution is no more and the Religion of Allah reigns supreme."
(Surah 8:39-40)

These and several other texts in the Qur'an (ie. Surah 2:216; 3:56; 4:74, 89; 8:39; 9:14, 111; etc.) and in the Hadith (Bukhari 52:256; 11: 626; Muslim 1:33; 20:4645; 19:4294; Tabari 9:69; Hisham 990; etc.) speak about fighting against the infidels and unbelievers for Allah.

A faithful Christian follows what the Bible says; a faithful Muslim follows what the Qur'an says. The KKK and "Muslim extremist" comparison misses the mark completely, so consider a better illustration. There are "Bible believers" who either haven't read the whole Bible or have been convinced by someone that certain texts no longer apply or don't mean what they say (ie. Baptism). The same is true with Islam. It is the "moderate Muslim," not the "extremist" who fails to read, ignores or misinterprets. I am curious, what is the non-violent explanation of "...strike off their heads..."? Now, don't get me wrong – I am happy that a large majority of Muslims in North America do not take seriously Allah's call for them to kill the infidels. However, just because they make up the majority in our nation at the present time does not mean they represent true Islam. They are as faithful to Allah as Bible believers who advocate a "faith only" doctrine are faithful to God.

Why is it important for us to acknowledge the truth about Islam? It is not good to accept error in any form, whether it be about the Bible, the Qur'an or anything else. Lies are of the devil, whether it be the theory of evolution, pseudo-Christianity or the commonly touted idea that "radicals" are not true representatives of Islam. I am thankful for those who have studied the sciences and are able to clearly show from evidence in nature why the evolutionary theory cannot be true. I am also thankful for those who study the Bible without the influence of human creeds, and who share with people the pure gospel message. Knowing the truth about evolution, I am able to more effectively combat that error, and hopefully convince people of the truth. Knowing the truth about false Christianity, hopefully I am better equipped to help those who are caught in denominational error to escape and come to Christ by the unadulterated gospel. Equally, knowing the truth about the Qur'an, hopefully I may be able to dissuade someone from turning to Islam, or help someone who is already an adherent to moderate Islam to realize what kind of religion it is, and perhaps be able to lead them to Christ. The bottom line is, knowing truth is always better than believing a lie.

My intent is not to promote fear, but to expose error, and error about error at that. Islam is error, but on top of this, an error about Islam has been propagated by some and swallowed by many – namely that Islam is a religion of peace. Further, I am not promoting hatred; the Bible commands us to love all men, even those who present themselves as our enemies (Matthew 5:44-45). Is the true expression of love not to correct those who are in error and lead them to truth, whether error presents itself as a form of pseudo-Christianity, the evolutionary theory, Islam, a lie about Islam, or some other error?

The Sermon on the Mount

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7) is the most famous, profound, and admired but least practiced sermon ever preached. The authority of the preacher is absolute (Matthew 7:28-29; cf. 28:18). The moral goal of this discourse soars to the heavens to God-like perfection (Matthew 5:48). Yet the lessons are eminently practical, meant to be obeyed (Matthew 7:24-27). The reward for obedience is entrance into the kingdom of heaven, both here (Matthew 5:19-20) and hereafter (Matthew 7:21-23).

The time was during Jesus' first preaching tour of Galilee about a year into His ministry on earth. The theme of his message was the good news of the approaching kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; cf. Mark 1:14-15). His fame had spread throughout the region in and around Palestine as the result of His preaching and miracles, and huge crowds thronged Him from throughout this large area (Matthew 4:23-25). It seems He first preached a shorter, similar lesson to His disciples in the hearing of the throng (Luke 6:17-49) and then withdrew to the mountain with His disciples alone to speak more fully and plainly (Matthew 5:1).

He then took two steps to insure the perpetuation of His work in the then soon to come kingdom of heaven. After spending all night in prayer to God, He selected twelve messengers who would first take the announcement of the eminent kingdom to all Israel and later take the message of salvation through Christ to the whole world (Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; Matthew chapter 10; 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:46-49). Then He delivered to His disciples the laws which would govern citizenship in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3,10,19,20; 6:10,13,33; 7:21). Those principles constitute the Sermon on the Mount.

Thus, the Sermon on the Mount is the announcement ahead of time of the rules governing citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. In the words of Foy E. Wallace, Jr., they are "Pentecost Pointers." Though, because the sermon was preached while the law was still in force, many of its illustrations pertain to the Mosaic covenant (e.g., Matthew 5:23), its principles apply to the New Testament age. In fact, in much of the sermon the Lord specifically replaces Mosaic legislation with His own (Matthew 5:21-48). As the kingdom of heaven Jesus promised is the rule of God through His Son in the hearts of His people, the church (Luke 17:20-21; Hebrews 1:1-2; Matthew 16:18-19) and is spiritual in nature (John 18:36; Romans 14:17), these laws pertain to the character of kingdom citizens. To enter the kingdom, one must be righteous (Matthew 5:20). The precepts of the kingdom lead its citizens to perfect character (Matthew 5:48). Seeking that kingdom first (Matthew 6:33) and obeying its precepts lead one to the final kingdom of heaven, the blissful abode with God (Matthew 7:21-23).

Even Matthew's introduction (Matthew 5:1-2) portrayed to his Jewish readers the gravity of the discourse. According to William Barclay, a rabbi would sit to deliver a formal, official announcement of His teaching. Barclay also observes that the clause, "Then He opened His mouth," was used in Greek to describe a solemn declaration that revealed that which was closest to one's heart.

In the discourse, the Master first revealed the righteous character of citizens of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3-12). Then He showed the relationship which kingdom citizens sustain to the unrighteous world (Matthew 5:13-16). Next He presented an overview of the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven, thus setting the theme of the discourse, by contrasting it with both that of the law of Moses and that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:17-20). Afterward He gave a more detailed contrast in six points of difference (Matthew 5:21-48). Next He contrasted the righteousness of the kingdom with hypocrisy (Matthew 6:1-18), then with materialism (6:19-34). Finally the Lord revealed how to obtain the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:7-27).

The Master was not simply giving a correct interpretation of the Law of Moses in Matthew 5:21-48. The most critical point in which this is true is Matthew 5:31-32. Matthew 5:31 is a reference to Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the Mosaic regulation of divorce. A man could divorce his wife for any "uncleanness" ("indecent" - NASB, ESV), and the put away woman could then remarry. But Christ teaches that anyone who marries a

woman who has been put away is committing adultery (verse 32).

Thus, while the Law of Moses contained the strictest moral code the world had known before Christ, the Lord Jesus raised the bar, instituting an even stricter moral standard, the standard of the kingdom of heaven. Moses had made allowances for the hardness of Israel's hearts; Christ makes none (Matthew 19:3-9). Thus, those who followed this higher standard during the earthly ministry of the Lord would certainly not violate the standard of Moses.

The authority with which the Master spoke amazed the people (Matthew 7:28-29). The scribes who taught the people would preface their teaching with Rabbi so and so has said (cf. Matthew 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). Their authority was based on a combination of the written law and oral tradition from the fathers. The prophets of old demanded a hearing by announcing, "Thus says the Lord" (a phrase found in 431 Old Testament verses). Jesus simply announced, "I say to you" (Matthew 5:18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 44; 6:2, 5, 16, 25, 29). He could do this because, as the Son of God, He was God's authorized spokesman (Hebrews 1:1-2), the Prophet (Acts 3:22-26) and Apostle (Hebrews 3:1) of God, and has been given all authority to speak for God (Matthew 11:27; 28:18).

In the Sermon on the Mount the Son of God revealed the principles of righteousness we must possess and live by to enter His kingdom now and to inherit it in the hereafter. These principles were not a correct explanation of Moses but an entirely new, much higher standard of righteousness, one which reflects the very moral nature of God. The wise will hear and obey; the foolish will not (Matthew 7:24-27). Is your life built on the unshakeable Rock or on shifting sand?

Shall We Do Evil That Good May Come?

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Introduction

Curtis Sliwa founded the organization Guardian Angels in 1978 as a citizens patrol to protect New York subway riders against violent crime. Largely due to favorable national publicity Sliwa and other members received, the non-profit organization grew to almost 5,000 members with chapters in 47 cities.

In November 1992 Sliwa admitted that he faked several dramatic incidents that brought him and Guardian Angels fame. Sliwa even got help from his priest to invent one occurrence. He said he needed to do this because the Guardian Angels "were in a sprint for survival" and called these methods "creative license."

Apparently Guardian Angels was a good organization accomplishing positive results in preventing crime. These fraudulent heroics helped the group survive and even thrive. Does that justify the deception? **Is it right to do something that would otherwise be wrong to accomplish a good purpose?**

Situation Ethics

Those who espouse the philosophy of situation ethics say yes. They claim the circumstances determine if something is right or wrong. "... any act - even lying, premarital sex, abortion, adultery, and murder - could be right, depending upon the circumstances" (Joseph Fletcher, Situation Ethics). Thus, Dr. Jack Kevorkian, "Dr. Death," defended assisting people to commit suicide because he prevented their continued suffering from terminal illnesses.

Institutional Brethren

Even Christians sometime fall prey to this attitude. Although gambling is not an authorized way to make money (Ephesians 4:28; Acts 4:34-35), manifests covetousness (Colossians 3:5-6) and violates the principle of love (Romans 13:8-10), some defend gambling for "a worthy cause." The State Lottery raises money for public schools and college tuitions.

Our institutional brethren have long used this argument. When confronted with the fact that church support

of orphanages violates the New Testament pattern for the organization of the church and is thus unscriptural, they reply, "But look how much good is being done!" The same appeal is made for unscriptural evangelistic organizations such as One Nation Under God and World Bible School.

Divorce for Causes Other than Fornication

Some brethren admit God's law is that fornication is the only reason for divorce (Matthew 5:32; 19:9) but argue that the law of love gives other causes, primarily abuse, if the situation demands it. This is precisely the "Situation Ethics" position of Joseph Fletcher.

In fact, to divorce one's mate for a cause other than fornication is a failure to love your neighbor as yourself, for it places before the mate the temptation to remarry, and the one who divorced that mate is responsible for the resultant sin (Matthew 5:32; cf. 18:6-7). Those who advocate divorce for reasons other than fornication share the blame.

Their position actually places love for oneself above love for God. The first and greatest commandment is to love God (Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-31). We express our love for God by obeying Him (1 John 5:3). He commands no divorce except for fornication (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).

The Scriptures

What does the Bible say? It is true that the appropriateness of some acts is determined by the situation. But these are things that are morally neutral, matters of liberty, things allowed but not required, such as eating meat (1 Corinthians 8:8-9).

But the Scriptures contain an absolute standard of right and wrong, a code of moral ethics we must not violate. To be guilty of lying, fornication, adultery, and murder is to forfeit one's hope of eternal life (cf. Revelation 21:8; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21).

If an organization is unscriptural, it is wrong and sinful regardless of the good it accomplishes (Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9).

Results of Situation Ethics

Situation Ethics makes each person his own standard. "... every man must decide for himself what is right" (Fletcher. 84). But people are not capable of being their own moral guides (Proverbs 16:25; 21:2; Jeremiah 10:23). Ancient Israel went to the depths of immorality during the period of the judges, because "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

Situation Ethics means an abandonment of the divine standard of right and wrong. "For the situationist there are no rules ... none at all..." (Fletcher. 55). We must submit ourselves to the New Testament standard of morality (Philippians 3:16; Ephesians 4:17-24).

Situation Ethics simply results in gross immorality. The "New Morality" is the old immorality. "I am prepared to argue that Christian obligation calls for lies and adultery and fornication and theft and promise breaking and killing sometimes, depending on the situation" (Fletcher, "Southern Baptist Christian Life Conference Address," Atlanta, 1972). The Scriptures demand that we practice a moral standard that reflects the holy nature of God (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 1:13-16).

Doing Evil That Good May Come

Some accused Paul of teaching, "Let us do evil that good may come." He called the accusation "slander" and asserted that the "condemnation" of his accusers was "just" (Romans 3:7-8). The position that an otherwise sinful act is justified by a good result is simply advocating, "Let us do evil that good may come." Whether the advocate admits it or not, it is situation ethics. It is the very position the apostle Paul scathingly denounced.

Conclusion

The twenty-first century has seen the virtual moral collapse of our nation. The philosophy of situation ethics is a major cause.

Curtis Sliwa admitted he was wrong. All who try to defend sinful actions by appealing to a good result should repent. Wrong is wrong, and sin is sin, regardless of the purpose. It is never right to do wrong!



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