

## 14. Too close for comfort?

January 6, 2013

Have you ever wondered why so many people hate the Bible with a passion and would go any length to stand against everything about Christianity and even persecute Christians to death? It is not like the Bible sprays graffiti on their cars, or burns their breakfast. It is because the Word of God reveals their sins as it is mentioned in John 3:

*John 3:19-20 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*

In addition to revealing unbelievers' sins, the Bible also tells Christians how we should live. It is not unusual for many half-hearted Christians to choose to ignore what the Bible says about their ungodly, backslidden behaviors.

The Bible can give very nitty gritty instructions to all of us; actually downright too close for comfort for many of us. The Word of God doesn't do this because it is the Ultimate Party Crasher, rather it is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

I believe that just about everyone of us will be convicted with this portion of Scripture this morning. When we are convicted by the Holy Spirit, there is only one course of action we must take – OBEY.

### A. ABOUT OUR LYING

*Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.*

We tell our children not to lie. If someone whom you don't want to talk calls you and one of your children answers the phone, you say to your child quietly, "Tell him that I am not here." What are you telling your child to do for you? It doesn't matter whether it is a small lie, big lie, or white lie. It is a lie and it is a deception.

Some would say, "Come on, deception is a harsh word. I am just giving selective truth." No matter how people want to package it, it still is a deception.

A lie is a statement that is contrary to fact, spoken with the intent to deceive. Satan is a liar; and he wants us to believe that God is a liar. The first recorded lie was done by none other than Satan in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3.

Whenever we speak truth, the Spirit of God works; but whenever we tell a lie, Satan goes to work in our lives. Revelation 22 speaks about how hell is prepared for those who love to make lies. Of course, this doesn't mean that anybody who ever told a lie will go to hell, but rather that those whose lives are controlled by lies are lost forever in hell. The Christian's life is controlled by truth.

In light of so much talk about the Fiscal Cliff and tax raise, it is hard to figure out who is speaking the truth from the White House and the Congress. The old saying must be true, "All the liars go to Washington, D.C."

There are two reasons why we must tell the truth:

1) **God is the truth and we are His followers.**

2) **We are members of one another in the family of God. What we say affects each other.**

Here is an important tip for you husbands: Let's say that your wife has been enjoying foods lately and added 20 lbs on herself. She puts on a new dress which shows those 20 lbs. exactly. Then, she asks you the question that you 'd rather jump off the plane without a parachute than answer, "Do I look fat in this dress?" What is your answer, men of God??? Tell her that there is something terribly wrong with that dress and she should take it back to the store immediately. Always blame the dress for your long happy marriage and not sleeping on your couch.

## **B. ABOUT OUR ANGER**

*Ephesians 4:26-27 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil.*

Does it surprise you that the Bible allows us – both OT (Psalm 4:4) and NT – to get angry? Now, Paul and David didn't have in mind temper tantrums but righteous anger that directs its rage at the appropriate object – sin and sinful behavior, but not sinners. And it's expressed for the right reason – to defend God's righteous standards, not to avenge personal grievances.

Jesus' driving the money-changers from the temple because they had turned God's house into a place of personal profit in Matthew 21 is a good example of righteous anger. We could use more of this kind of anger today. Too often we Christians remain silent and apathetic while sin and injustice run rampant over people.

Unfortunately, we more often become angry because others fail to give us what we want, like the respect we feel we deserve, or they may inconvenience us, or they may hurt our feelings. Whatever the cause, our anger often stems from selfish desires, not holy vigilance.

It is difficult for us to practice a truly holy anger or righteous indignation because our emotions are tainted by our sinful and selfish nature, and we do not have the same knowledge that God has in all matters. God sees everything clearly and knows everything completely, but we do not.

If your anger continues, it will start to change its shape to wrath, murderous thoughts, or malice like a simmering pot that is about to boil over. Then, it becomes a sin. Before that happens, we must settle the matter quickly. The fire of anger, if not quenched by loving forgiveness, will spread and defile and destroy the work of God.

According to Jesus in Matthew 5, anger is the first step toward murder, because anger gives the devil a foothold in our lives, and Satan is a murderer. Satan hates God and God's people, and when he finds a believer with the sparks of anger in his heart, he fans those sparks, adds fuel to the fire, and does a great deal of damage to God's people and God's church.

## **C. ABOUT STEALING**

*Ephesians 4:28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*

Stealing encompasses a whole array of activities, from the obvious, such as robbery, burglary, shoplifting, embezzlement, and taking office supplies, to the subtle, such as wasting time at work. Whatever the activity, modern or ancient, Paul exhorted his readers to “steal no longer.”

To much of the dismay of the believers of socialism, the Bible supports capitalism. “You shall not steal” is one of the Ten Commandments and God instituted the right of private ownership of property. He also tells us to be merciful and generous to the needy people.

Just as satan is a liar and a murderer, he is also a thief.

*John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

When satan tempted Eve, he led her to become a thief by taking the forbidden fruit that didn't belong to her and Adam. Then, she, in turn, led Adam to be a thief as well. The first Adam was a thief and was cast out of Paradise, but the Last Adam, Jesus Christ, turned to a thief on the cross and said:

*Luke 23:43 And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”*

What is the remedy for stealing? Work and help others. The current federal government encourages the American people to depend on the government for living rather than creating the right business environment for people to work. Do you know why they do this? The more people that depend on the government for living, the longer and firmer the people in the government can hold their power and control over people's lives.

A lazy Christian robs himself, others, and God. Of course, apostle Paul was not writing to believers who could not work because of handicaps or loss of one's job, but with those who would not work rather expect someone to give them freebie.

#### **D. ABOUT CORRUPT WORD**

*Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.*

Would you agree if I say, “The mouth and heart are connected”? The Bible says so: *Matthew 12:34b For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*

Since you have become a born-again Christian, you started to do the things and talk differently than what you used to do, right? If your honest answer is, “No, not really. I do and talk the same way I used to do,” then you have to question yourself whether your salvation was genuine or not.

After you become a born-again Christian, you may, from time to time, accidentally slip a few bad words out of your mouth, that is the area you need to pay more attention in future for the sake of the name of God.

Many years ago, my family went to a Christian high school drama because our daughter Michelle's friends were in it. In the middle of drama, one of the actors used a cuss word. Many people in the audience thought that it was funny. Listen, there is nothing funny about a Christian using a cuss word. Don't excuse it as “French.” Just don't cuss, or use vulgar or profanity words. They don't belong to the mouth of a believer of Jesus Christ, understand?

While I am on the soap box, listen carefully, please. Don't make sexual innuendoes to others or participate with laughter when there are dirty jokes mentioned. These are a part of corrupt words that apostle Paul talks about.

When I hear unbelievers use profanity or vulgar words, I feel sorry for them, because they are going to regret those words ever came out of their mouths when they stand in front of the White Throne Judgment of God before they will be thrown into hell. But I really cringe when I hear a Christian uses the same kind of ignorant language even though he or she should have known better.

The remedy for a corrupt word is filling our heart with the love of Christ so that only truth, grace, and purity can come out of our mouths. Remember that your words have power, either for good or evil. We can tear down others with talk of malice or strengthen others with encouragement that comes from the Word of God.

### **E. ABOUT BITTERNESS**

*Ephesians 4:30-32 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.*

How do we grieve the Holy Spirit? It is when we have bitterness with one another whether the other person is a fellow believer in Christ or not.

Bitterness refers to a settled hostility that poisons the whole inner man. Somebody does something we do not like, so we harbor ill will against him. Bitterness leads to wrath, which is the explosion on the outside of the feelings on the inside. Wrath and anger often lead to clamor or evil speaking. The first is fighting with fists, the second is fighting with words. It is difficult to believe that Christians would act this way, but they do.

Sometimes, both believing Christian husband and wife can have bitterness between them. There is nothing colder and nothing more terrible than turning cold backs on each other as they are about go to sleep in the same bed. If you came to church in that mindset, I hope and pray that you guys, whoever you are, make peace together this afternoon before the Lord.

A couple of weeks ago, I asked you guys if there is any husband and wife have never argued. Alex Rodriguez raised his hand. I thought he was joking since he is such a jokester. After the service, he told me that he and his wife Amy have never argued in their marriage, because they start their day with a prayer together and reading the Word of God. It is no wonder. I am so sorry, Alex, that I thought you were joking. I apologize. Please forgive me.

Bitterness and anger, usually over trivial things, make havoc of homes, churches, and friendships. Bitterness does not only make havoc with the people around us, but also within ourselves. We choose to lock ourselves within the heavy prison wall of bitterness in our hearts even though we have the key to get out. The key is forgiveness.

The other person whom you need to forgive may not want anything to do with you or not available to do so. But you can forgive that person in the Lord and move on. You don't need to stay inside of that prison of bitterness.

## **F. APPLICATIONS**

- 1) Speak the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help you God.
- 2) Be angry for unrighteousness, but don't let your anger turn into a sin.
- 3) Don't steal whether it is the things that doesn't belong to you or the company time.
- 4) Be nice in your words, not speaking cuss words, vulgarity, or profanity. God is within you and listens to what you say with your mouth and your heart.
- 5) Don't let bitterness become a resident in your heart. Forgive that person as much as you want to be forgiven by God.
- 6) If you are convicted from the Lord through this study, OBEY Him.