



THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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Cannot Be Concealed

By RICK LIGGIN

The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after. Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed” (1Tim. 5:24-25).

With some men, it is obvious to everyone that what they are doing is sinful. Their sins are “quite evident” and quite easily spotted. Their actions are, in fact, so obviously sinful that no one can rightly deny it. It is clear to everyone that what is being done here is wrong; and it is equally apparent, even before judgment, that such men stand self-condemned.

But unfortunately, it is not this way with every man’s sin. Some men’s sins are not so obvious. The fruit of their evil is more subtle, less easily detected. It might be that initially we cannot detect the sin at all; or it might be that we suspect “something is wrong here,” but we can’t quite “put our finger on it”; there simply isn’t enough evidence—yet—to convict the sinner. We are watchful of such men – and we must be – because the sins of these men can do great damage to the body of Christ! You see, some men are really good at hiding their sins; they are so good, in fact, that often it is only after the wicked deeds are done and the damaging effects are fully realized that we finally are able to identify the sins and the wicked men who commit them. But please notice that even with these men, their sins “follow after” them.

In a similar but contrasting way, “deeds that are good are quite evident” (1 Tim. 5:25)! It’s not that those with pure motives are doing their good deeds to be noticed by men! But the point is that good deeds don’t have to be “trumpeted.” Why? Because they are obvious – if not to everyone, at

least, to some – and certainly to God. We cannot hide the positive effects of our good works. Good works naturally produce good fruit...fruit that is visible to all who will see.

But we are also assured that deeds “which are otherwise (i.e. anything less than good) *cannot be concealed!* And right here is the point at which we all need to really sit up and pay attention. You need to know *with certainty* that if you are involved in some kind of sin—even a more subtle, less obvious kind of sin—*it cannot be hidden!* As the Bible warns: “Be sure your sins will find you out” (Num. 32:23). “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper” (Prov. 28:13), and “he who perverts his way will be found out” (Prov. 10:9). Eventually, your sin will be exposed and you will reap what you have sown (Gal. 6:7-8)! You may think you are hiding it now, and you may be...at least from some. But you cannot hide it forever! God knows about your sin. He knows about it *now*; and soon enough others will know about it, too. So, why not repent and stop it *now*— before you get caught and before your sin causes any more hurt!

It is much wiser and will be much better for you—and for everyone else—if you will “confess and forsake” your sins altogether (Prov. 28:13). Carnal men may disagree, but the Bible teaches that there is great security in forsaking all sin and in walking uprightly! In contrast to the one whose perverted way “will be found out,” the man “who walks in integrity walks securely” (Prov. 10:9); and in contrast to the one who “will not prosper” because he “conceals his transgressions,” the man who “confesses and forsakes” his sins “will find compassion” (Prov. 28:13). The man who confesses and forsakes his sin will not only find compassion from our merciful God, who cannot refuse “a broken and contrite

heart” (Psa. 51:17), but is also far more likely to find compassion from those who have been hurt by his wicked deeds.

And so, we would strongly urge anyone who might be trying to hide a “secret sin” or “get away with” some ugly transgression: correct it! Acknowledge your sin, confess it—to God and to anyone affected by it—and abandon it! God can and will forgive any sin that we will admit and forsake! And most of those who might have been hurt by our sin will forgive us, too! But we have to really “come clean” about the sin (Jer. 3:12-14). We have to admit and abandon it and return to God with a whole heart! We might as well do that, because we simply are not going to get away with it! Our sin “cannot be concealed!”

P.S. When some respected brother in Christ is engaged in a secret sin, and that sin is somehow found out (and it will be...eventually), please know that this is not biblical Christianity! It is hypocrisy! So, don’t let it discourage you! This man’s hypocrisy, is in fact, an attempt by the enemy (our diabolical adversary, Satan) to defile *many!* He is not just trying to defile the one practicing sin but also any who might be discouraged by this sinner’s evil example. Biblical Christianity deals with sin in biblical ways. It exposes the sin (Eph. 5:11-12); and, in love, it seeks to correct the sin (Matt. 18:15-17, and to purge it out of the group (1 Cor. 5:1-13). Believe me: I know it can be disappointing and downright discouraging—to find out that someone you trusted and respected has been hiding his sin; but don’t let it discourage you and make you give up on trying to do what is right. If you do that, then the adversary has really won.

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Will The Real Legalist



Please Stand Up!

By **DAVID DIESTELKAMP**

It is a familiar, oft repeated scenario: Someone suggests that something is wrong because it is unwise or unauthorized or within the silence of God and immediately a charge is leveled that the person is being a bigoted, judgmental, legalist—binding where God has not bound. I think something important is missing in this line of thinking.

A lot has already been said by others about not binding the ideas and traditions of men. It's a needed, but not new, warning (Matt. 15:9). A lot has already been said by others about our need to obey the revealed will of God in all aspects. It's also a needed, but not new, warning (2 Thess. 1:8).

One of the greatest struggles in balancing these two not mutually exclusive Biblical concepts is in the area of silence or uncertainty. Some silence or uncertainty may be due to an individual's ignorance of the Scriptures. He or she just hasn't found it in the text or understood it yet. In some cases, Scripture gives us some information but not enough to know something for certain or reach a reasonable conclusion.

And there are times when there simply isn't anything in Scripture about a subject. So, when we aren't sure from Scripture (due to silence, vagueness, or ignorance), what must we do?

Begin by remembering that silence isn't always silence. We rarely have what I'll call "silent silence" in Scripture. For example, crack cocaine isn't mentioned at all in the Bible, but the Bible isn't silent on self-control and sober mindedness, principles which recreational use of crack threatens and violates. We are often told that the Bible is silent concerning church buildings, however the New Testament's information concerning church assemblies necessarily implies a place—meaning that there isn't "silent silence" concerning church buildings (places for assembling). Other examples can be given, but I think you see the point. "Silent silence" only occurs in Scripture when there is no authority for or information about a matter from which we can make applications, draw conclusions, learn wisdom, etc.

Of course, sometimes "silent silence" does exist in Scripture. Moses' provided

some age-lasting advice for such situations in Numbers 9:8. Moses was asked what those should do who were prevented from keeping the Passover. Lacking revelation on this, Moses replied, "Stand still, that I may hear what the Lord will command concerning you." Is not this the response throughout Scripture concerning "silent silence"? Is not this the very purpose of Scripture?

Now look at this a different way. What is someone really saying when they insist on an answer for, "Where does it say it is wrong?" or "Where does it say not to?" or "Where is it totally forbidden?" Are they not saying they will only accept something as wrong if a law specifically says it is wrong? Must there be a legal system to spell out everything not to do? Must there be a specific commandment forbidding a thing before it should be avoided? These people demand laws, legal systems, and commandments. "I will only be controlled or stopped by laws, legal systems, and commandments." Who is the real "legalist" when it comes to God's silence?

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Faith in the Promised Son

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

What is notable about God's promise to make "a great nation" (Gen. 12:2) of Abram ("exalted father") is that he was childless (cf. Ac. 7:5). Even after several years of sojourning in Canaan, going to Egypt during a famine (Gen. 12:10-20), and then returning to Canaan, he "was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold" (13:1-4); but Abram still had no children of his own. Indeed, when God came to him "in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward,'" Abram replied, "Lord God, what will you give me, seeing I go childless?...You have given me no offspring" (15:1-3).

Abram wondered aloud if one born among his servants would be his heir. God was emphatic and explicit, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." Then He brought him outside and said,

'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be'" (vv. 4,5). The simple statement that follows is the quintessence of what God seeks from all of us and its value to Him. "And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (v. 6). The faith he expressed on this occasion was exemplary of what God values from those created in His image. It is for Abram's faith that "he was called the friend of God" (Jas. 2:23; cf. 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8).

Yet, not too long after this, Abram submits to his wife's idea to take her handmaid as a surrogate through whom he might have a child (Gen. 16:1-3). This presumptuous act conceived a son (v. 15), but it was "wrong" (v. 5) and *not* in harmony with God's will (17:18,19). When God assured Abram that he would have offspring from his "own body," the implication was that he would do so by Sarai, the one with whom he had become one flesh (cf. Gen. 2:24).

Fourteen years later, when Abram was 99 years old, God again appeared to him as "Almighty God" (El-Shaddai), reiterated the covenant, changed Abram's name to Abraham ("father of a multitude"), and gave circumcision as a sign of the covenant (17:1-14). God made it clear that it would be through a son borne by Sarah and his descendants that the covenant would be established (vv. 15-19). While all of this was laughable from a natural perspective, it was divinely doable. That Abraham believed is evident because "the very same day [he] was circumcised...and all the men of his house" (vv. 26,27). "And being fully convinced that what [God] had promised He was able to perform...it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:21,22). This was not written only for Abraham, "but also for us...who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (vv. 23,24; cf. 4:1-22).

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SOVEREIGN LORD

By MASON VENUSO

Do you ever pray, "Please help me to grow in faith" or, like the disciples, "Increase our faith" (Lk. 17:5)? Or perhaps you pray, "Help me to be more willing to share the gospel," or, like the early Christians as they faced increased pressure from the authorities, "Grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness" (Ac. 4:29)? Such prayers are clearly in line with Scripture, yet it can seem odd to pray for these kinds of things which would seem to depend on *our* choice to be more faithful or bold. Are we to ask God to act in matters that depend in some way on our cooperation? The best place to see how God can carry out his will in a way that engages people's wills is in the sacrifice of Jesus.

Without question, God's sovereignty and human free will meet in this event, the prime event of history. You cannot do without God's sovereignty in the matter lest the cross become some sort of accident or become a plan of God that was less than certain. You cannot do without human free will lest mankind be viewed as guiltless of Jesus' execution. Somehow we must affirm that God delivered Christ over according to his predetermined plan and that people are held responsible for crucifying him. Peter declared, "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (Ac. 2.2:3). Christians may disagree about how to reconcile these two ideas, but both are so stated in Scripture that we should take care not to inadvertently deny one to account for the other. Human sin and rebellion (Ac. 2:23) as well as God's love and justice (Rom. 3:25) were active at the cross.

The disciples in Acts 4:23-31 understood this in quite specific terms. They read Psalm 2 as evidence that Herod and Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified according to God's predestined plan. Did Herod and Pilate freely choose to crucify Jesus? This seems evident. Did God predetermine that this would be done? Yes. Whether or not we can understand how this works, it appears that God is using these specific rulers without compromising their free will. This does not diminish God's power but demonstrates his power and wisdom all the more for his ability to atone for us in the very act that was the peak of man's rebellion. To establish the fact that this is not an isolated idea here in Acts 4, consider people like Judas and Cyrus. Jesus said of Judas' betray-

al, "For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" (Lk. 22:22). It seems that Judas was predetermined to betray Jesus, and yet Judas would be held responsible for taking that action. Cyrus is a more positive example. God appointed Cyrus through Isaiah by name, long before Cyrus existed (Isa. 44:28). Cyrus, like Judas and Herod and Pilate, freely did what God predestined for him to do. It is astounding but not incoherent or contradictory.

If God can predetermine what *these* specific people would choose to do, then the idea that God may have that kind of sovereign activity in *my* own life would not necessarily be a denial of my free choice. The disciples in Acts 4 can help us see one way that this is relevant to ourselves. They addressed our "sovereign Lord" (Ac. 4:24) to pray for him to grant them boldness. This is significantly different than some things we might ask for. This is not the same as asking for something totally independent of our involvement (such as asking for rain that will water the crops). Boldness is not something external to ourselves which we receive like weather or food. It has very much to do with our own wills. Luke seems to then imply that God granted them boldness. For he tells us, "And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness" (Ac. 4:31). We are to understand that they spoke with boldness because God granted them to speak with boldness. We do not have to discern how this works in order to affirm that it is so. There is no need to conclude that God overrode their wills. Nor does this have to contradict clear biblical teaching on human responsibility. God can grant them to speak with boldness even as they are responsible to speak with boldness.

Lest we think this is a useless exercise in theology, think about how this affects our own prayers. Consider how Jesus prayed for Peter. Jesus specifically prayed for Peter's faith and not that the temptation would be small or that the circumstances would be easy. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Lk. 22:31-32). What a mixture! Jesus prayed for *God* to preserve Peter's faith. *Peter* had the responsibility of being faithful and returning in faith. Jesus indicates that he knew Peter's faith would, in fact,

survive. There is more to consider than this article can discuss, but we should at least recognize that God is active in my personal decision to be faithful. We should trust God to be able to grant boldness to us who are responsible to be bold (Ac. 4), to grant protection from temptation to us who are to resist temptation (Luke 11:4), to grant greater love to us who are responsible to grow in love (Phil. 1:9), and to strengthen us in faith who are to freely trust in him (Rom. 16:25-37). In God's unfathomable wisdom, he involves us in his predetermined will. If we deny our responsibility in relation to what God is doing, we have unduly acquitted ourselves. If we deny God's ability to give us something like boldness or faith, we may have formed a different god than the God of Scripture. May the sovereign Lord embolden us to proclaim his predetermined sacrifice to a world that shares responsibility for his crucifixion.

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Paul's Mother

By STEVE FONTENOT

Great Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine" (Rom. 16:13 - NASB). Paul is the author of this letter. Is this Paul's mother in the *flesh*, or in *spirit* (i.e., had enjoyed maternal care from her in some way)?

We know hardly anything of Paul's family except that his father was a Pharisee (Ac 23:6). Paul was reared and learned in the Hebrew religion (Ac. 22:3, Gal 1:14, Phil. 3:5). Unless he was raised by other relatives, this points to his parents (or one of them if the other had passed away) being strong devotees to the strict Jewish religion triumphed by Pharisees. The woman in the text was a Christian and was living in Rome.

If this is Paul's fleshly mother, this is the *only* mention of her in all his epistles, and it is but an allusion. If this is his fleshly mother and she was now a Christian, it seems all the more strange that he would but make a passing reference to her and also mention her as the mother of Rufus first.

It seems more probable (and most, if not all, commentators take this view) that Paul calls her his "mother" because of her motherly care in some way expressed toward him (Cp. Mk. 10:30; Judg. 5:7).

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We are so thankful for the many who have made it possible for this publication to continue. As reflected in the listing above we have a sizeable surplus. This issue, with the foreign mailing is expected to cost about \$575, which should still leave over \$1,150 for future issues.

*"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise.
Be thankful to Him, and bless His name"*

~Psalm 100:4

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Philippians 4:8

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Caring for Connie

AND HOW IT COULD IMPACT THIS PUBLICATION

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Some of you are aware that my dear wife of 55 years is in the late stages of Parkinson's Disease and has been placed on Hospice home care. It was in January of 2010 that we received the unwelcome news that Connie exhibited the beginning stages of this disease. Even before the diagnosis, some in the family had noticed that she was "not herself." At first, the doctors thought she was experiencing depression and cognitive degeneration, but soon the tremors began and neurologists were consulted. Up until now we have not announced her condition in this publication, but neither have we hidden it.

Those who know her (especially those who knew her prior to the onset of this disease) witnessed a godly woman who was very active in her family as well as in the Lord's kingdom. Many younger women can testify to the teaching they have

received from her. In my estimation, she has been the model of a "helper" in both the home and in my work as a preacher. She continues to be an example of grace and faith even in the face of severe physical disabilities and cognitive dementia.

Her rapidly declining abilities are requiring more help than I can physically provide without considerable assistance. As a result, I have accepted the offer of our daughter, Suzy and son-in-law Scott Miller to relocate to their home in Bloomington, Illinois, for the duration. Of our children's homes, it is the one most conducive to providing the needed care. I intend to maintain our current home with the hope of eventually returning to it. If we are able to obtain hired help for Sundays, it is my intent to make the two-hour commute on weekends to worship with the church in Sycamore. While my work with the church in Sycamore will continue on a part-time basis, David Bunting (currently of Rochester,

Minnesota) has agreed to come and work with us as an evangelist beginning in June.

This brings me to how all this could impact the continued publication of *Think*. It is my hope to continue to edit, print, and mail the paper for awhile longer, but time and circumstances will determine whether that will be possible. Other family members are willing and able to do the editing if needed; and though they are capable of operating my printing press, I would need to familiarize them with the pre-press process. To hire the printing and folding to be done commercially would certainly add to the cost of production.

If nothing else, the changing circumstances have dictated that I be less concerned with deadlines, as evidenced by the delay of this issue.

In all these changes we solicit your prayers, always with the understanding that we must "wait on the Lord" the Source of renewed strength (Psa. 27:14).