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CHURCH RESTORATION

Part 2

Proverbs 6:16-19: There Are Six Things That The Lord Hates



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Some people again take the Scripture out of context when they say, "I just have to ask God to forgive me." That is not true! God said to leave your gift at the altar and make it right with your brother before God will forgive you. He says to confess our faults one with another. The whole message of the gospel is reconciliation or restoration of fellowship with God and our fellowman. If one portion of that fellowship is broken both are broken. One cannot be right with God if he holds sin against his brother. That is a false doctrine made up by sinful man.

Again, if someone does not care if he renews his fellowship with his brother, if he is not concerned whether his brother forgives him, then there is not real repentance, restoration, or reconciliation between himself, God and his brethren. God has not forgiven since true renewal of fellowship has not really been sought. Instead, a deception has been attempted. These type of people are like the demons who say I believe in God, but they do not want, nor care whether they really renew their fellowship with either God or their fellowmen. They just want to relieve their conscience and allow deception of themselves and others to continue. One reason this type of person only wants to confess to God is they misinterpret the doctrine of grace, which gives a believer a God-given ability to overcome and resist the temptation to

continue in sin/alienation between God/man.

Grace is not a license to sin, that the modern day apostate seems to state. They have forgotten that Calvary has made no difference on God's attitude of sin. He cannot bear to look on it. That which cost Him the death of His Holy One remains and ever will remain of utmost abhorrence to Him. They have subtly distanced themselves from this aspect of God's nature consciously or subconsciously because they do not want to really develop a relationship with Him. They don't want to know His nature or seek His face that a close relationship would demand, so they treat Him with unconscious contempt. It would shock them more if a friend were displeased with them, but God's grief and shock no longer affects them.

They say they have reverence for God but they do not even respect Him. They would experience more relief getting matters straightened out with an angry garbage collector than with an angry God. Their understanding of God's grace has become devalued to what Bonhoeffer describes as "cheap grace."

NOTE: If it fills you with deep shame to confess to a close friend what is easily confessed to God, then your confession to God is in some sense unreal. The shame validates the transaction. Confession is not merely a verbal

description of thoughts and actions. People who truly confess to God no longer care whether others learn about their secret sin. There is such a deep shame and horror of what they did. They no longer want to protect their own pride and self but they want to do anything to restore whatever damage that their sin had sustained whether it is in relationship or otherwise!

How are we supposed to deal with sin/alienation between people in the church? "Go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone." (Matthew 18:15)

People think of a million excuses, rationalizing why they should disobey God's clear instructions. "I could be mistaken." So why not find out and set your mind at rest like God has said. Quit disobeying God in this test of faithfulness and obedience by delaying, speculating and/or gossiping and go and talk with him. "I might offend him." What you really mean is he might reject you and you would rather God reject you than your friend. You do not want to pick up your cross in obedience and represent Christ. "But perhaps I should ask someone's advice first." NO! That above all else must be avoided. "But shouldn't I pray about it with someone first?" "Wouldn't it be good if I had some prayer backing?" Prayer backing? Don't you really want someone to take your side against this other person? You are subconsciously

asking them to take your side against this other person. You are subconsciously alienating them because of sinning against God's instructions, brother against brother. Be honest if you really want to reconcile with the intent of Scripture. You would not want to look better than your brother; you would want to protect your brother's reputation if possible, so you would go first to him and him alone. What you need to do is pray alone that you develop the courage/faith to obey God and go alone. Gossip is gossip and prayer with another person in this instance is just another form of gossip. Prayer or asking another person's advice can be a spiritual way of avoiding your duty to treat the matter with the utmost confidentiality. It is only too easy to deceive ourselves about our motives.

Any attempt to break God's clear instruction on keeping the matter solely between you and your brother is the first hint that obedience to Matthew 18:15 is suspect. GOSSIP: "Do you mind if I ask your advice..?" Or, "will you pray with me over so and so?" "Please don't tell anyone but I need some advice or I need some prayer." "Pastor, will you give me some advice about so and so?" "He is setting a bad example the way he is doing that." "I do not want you to tell my fellow missionary what I am going to tell you because then we will have a hard time working together."

There are a variety of forms and faces to gossip in the church today but all of them break God's clear mode of avoiding gossip and slander and instead of bringing true reconciliation they bring alienation where people refuse to work with other people. It leads to where missionaries etc., no longer trust one another and their own leadership. The church today is more interested in keeping the confidentiality of the person that gossips. He is breaking the mode

of God's instructions. We the church, by listening to gossip and keeping their confidentiality instead of forcing them to talk to the person they are slandering, to seek the truth and reconciliation, are breaking God's way of reconciliation and prevention of gossip. Thus alienation continues in the church and among the leadership.

The beauty of Christ's instruction is that it avoids gossip, which always brings alienation. It forces the person who was going to gossip to develop faith by meditating on God's Word and praying. Thus, the Spirit will force him to examine his own heart in the process, as one will have to do when they are in God's presence. This will ensure that one's intent is pure, that sin is not in their life in this issue, and that they start the process for true reconciliation brought on by truth. This is accomplished by following God's mode for healing. Restoration of broken relationship, forgiveness and true renewal of fellowship between God and brethren can then take place.

NOTE: The entire purpose and message of the gospel is to restore the fellowship that was broken between God and man by sin. If we settle for mere words of forgiveness without a real renewal of fellowship then we have been deceived and are deceived about the purpose and reason for reconciliation and we have discerned falsely that real confession and reconciliation were made.

NOTE: The beauty of Christ's mode is it alone ensures true reconciliation (confession, repentance, forgiveness, renewal of fellowship) has an opportunity to take place and it protects the innocent against gossip and slander.

The first step is to go alone without anyone aware of the issue, reason or purpose of the meeting. Publicity hinders reconciliation. Suppose finally, you eventually go consulting first with a pastor and talk with the person you have a grievance with. You discover you were wrong about your thoughts. Already you have done your brother the injustice of spreading a wrong impression about him, a wrong impression that might remain in the confused memory of the person whose advice you sought, even though later you sought to correct it. You might get a smile and a comment "Oh, I am glad you were wrong" but SLANDER sticks in the memory of the person more easily than correction of SLANDER. This is one of the devil's main tools of stopping the effectiveness of a man of God!

Too many times in religious circles (staff meetings, etc.) people are "prayerfully" discussed (gossiped), "prayerfully" judged and "prayerfully" condemned long before they might get an opportunity to present the truth.

After you have exhausted seeking restoration during the course of the first step (possibly going many, many times to the party alone and spending much time in prayer etc.) then one goes now to the party with witnesses. Again the witnesses are there for redemptive purposes which include a continuation of confidentiality and a lack of gossip and slander. If the issue can be solved without the case being known to any further number of people, then reconciliation between God and brethren has been achieved at a minimum expense of public awareness and personal shame. The witnesses are there to insure that truth is arrived at, true guilt and sin is confessed and relieved and restoration of fellowship is renewed. The witnesses also can pray and counsel trying to help the guilty party

to truly repent. If this second step fails, then the witnesses will be in a position to testify in front of the proper forum. The person will be able to speak the truth without criticizing or judging falsely.

Finally, the third step is to bring the rebellious party in front of the proper forum once again for redemptive purpose of trying to restore the brother (rebel). At this point you are dealing with a stubborn and proud person with an independent spirit/will. These are the same conditions that separated both Lucifer and Adam and Eve from God. Many people allow human sympathy and human love to stop them from taking this final step. We must trust God who made man and understands that only divine love can possibly restore this fallen brother. God understands the psychology of man and realizes what it takes to restore a rebellious one back to God. Man's will is what either identifies or separates a person from or to God. God said that if this rebellious person will not repent then we are to treat him as a separated person since in heaven he is already separated from God. Thus, we are to turn him over to the devil by removing him formally and collectively from the fellowship both in the church and socially. Through his isolation and humiliation and shame he can possibly examine himself and truly repent. At this point his human feelings and suffering is not the primary concern. His eternal soul is what truly matters.

What is sad today is that Jesus' words startle the modern reader with the simplicity of His beginning. *"If your brother sins."* In our age of tolerance and confusion we are not used to thinking of sin as that easily identifiable. Jesus assumes that the moral standards by which sin is to be identified are knowable and known. He further assumes that the offender and those who reprove him share a common moral

yardstick. This shows the sad condition of the church today when people no longer can identify or discern sin.

Lucifer led the first split through gossip, conspiracy and rebellion against authority. He talked to the other angels questioning the Word of God and criticizing policy and decisions. He was jealous of God's position and wanted the others to give attention to his wisdom.

Judas betrayed Jesus and the other disciples out of again, pride. He was not pleased with Jesus leadership and His decisions. When the oil was poured over Jesus he became angry and said that the oil could have been sold and the money from it used for the poor. When in reality Judas was jealous of the attention and blessing Jesus was receiving. Their jealousy led them to verbally attack and frame Jesus to discredit His message and turn the attention away from Jesus and back onto themselves.

Proverbs 6:16-19 tells us, *"There are six things which the Lord hates, seven which are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers."*

Homosexuality, adultery, fornication etc., is not on the list. Pride and lying, gossip and slander come first. This is what God calls the sin of murder. Character assassination God hates worse than murder because it stops His Word from being preached, heard and accepted.

Church politics today as in the days Jesus walked the earth are just as sinful and destructive. In secular politics the

heathen talk and belittle one another publicly where there can at least be open debate and rebuttal. But in church politics the seven sins, which are an abomination before God daily, occur. Church leaders smile at you and hypocritically talk about you behind your back without the opportunity of the truth being presented from the innocent party. Thus they like to appear as being very "Christian" with a smile where in reality they are very sinful, selfish and destructive. The smile should really reveal a dagger as their self-righteousness conceals their pride (weakness) and jealousy. Their cowardliness instead of faithfulness causes them to listen to other ungodly talebearers who also have a personal problem with the righteous but together they indulge in their vanities and lusts. Without a trial the innocent are slandered, discredited and condemned. Next, counsel and strategy are now discussed and carried through on how to separate, divide and destroy God's righteous servant. Letters are sent, phone calls are made all as they smile and shake your hand yet the messenger and message are being discredited and discounted until God's truth no longer can be spoken.

Thus as Jesus was attacked for His righteousness, speaking truth which exposed the sins of others, so the innocent are villainized today.

Nothing changes except the names of the guilty. Leaders today slander and try to discredit the servant of God out of jealousy. They want to remain in control of the congregations instead of allowing God to lead His church. They use the people for personal gain and to build their personal dreams and visions. Be faithful and follow God's methods for fellowship with God and man.