

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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"The Accuser of Our Brethren"

In Revelation 12:10 Satan is referred to as "the accuser of our brethren." The word "accuse" is defined, "(1) to charge with, or declare to have committed a crime, (2) to find at fault; to blame . . ." (Webster 14). Sometimes a person is justly accused. However, that is not what is spoken of here.

Do we have any examples of Satan accusing "our brethren before God" (Rev. 12:10)? Yes, we find such in Job 1:6-11; 2:1-6. Job was a good man! God himself testified to this fact. However, it did not matter to Satan. He accused Job anyway. Here we see a true picture of Satan as "the accuser of our brethren." Satan also tempts mankind. Hence, people can become "accusers of our brethren" and share in the devil's work.

We see people carrying out the work of the devil in both testaments. Job's brethren falsely accused him (4:7-9). The Pharisees falsely accused Jesus (Matt. 12:22-24). Among the sins characteristic of the "last days" is that some will be "false accusers" (2 Tim. 3:3). If people can become false accusers, then brethren can become false accusers. The danger that brethren might partake in the devil's work evidences the need for this study.

Anyone Can Accuse Anyone of Anything!

The Bible teaches that the above point is true. Job said to his accusers in the long ago, "I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you and shake mine head at you" (16:4). Likewise the Pharisees' accusation against our Lord shows that anyone is able to dredge up any kind of charge against another (Matt. 12:24).

Today our media has dredged up countless "witnesses" of questionable character and quoted them to the hurt of some public figure. A headline I have before me now reads, "_____ accuses _____ of dishonesty." I have deleted the names as they are unimportant. Experience with our news media tells us that we could place almost

anyone's name into the blanks, so rampant is the practice of trumping up charges against others. The danger is that, in such an environment as we presently live, brethren might adopt such tactics. In fact, they have.

A major cause of problems among brethren today is unproven accusations and brethren feeling free to make them. Brethren are doing the work of the devil! What happens when brethren so conduct themselves?

The Effects of Unproven Accusations

1. Such accusations hurt people. Even a child is upset when accused of something of which he is not guilty. Job's friends hurt him with their words (Job 16:1-2). Job felt the inward pain that comes to one who is falsely accused as have many brethren today who have faced such accusations.
2. Such accusations hurt people's reputations. It is evident that Paul's reputation suffered in the eyes of some of his brethren in the church at Corinth because of false accusations made by his enemies there (2 Cor. 10:2, 10). They apparently even turned Paul's refusal of support from the church there into an accusation (cf. 2 Cor. 11:7-9; 12:13). This reminds me of a story from modern day America where a public figure was accused of a crime or impropriety and "tried" in the media. He was eventually found not guilty and, upon pronouncement of the verdict, asked the judge, "Now where do I go to get my reputation back?" When we consider what it takes to build a reputation, it is sad to note how a person can be hurt by the false charges of irresponsible people.
3. Such accusations can result in physical harm. Our Lord's treatment at the hands of the Jewish authorities shows the truthfulness of the above point. He was accused again and again (Matt. 12:24; 26:59-61; Luke 23:3, 10) and though he was found innocent (Luke 23:14), they killed him anyhow! The false charges against Jews of being "untermensch" (subhuman) and plotting against non-Jewish people made by the Nazis in Germany in the 1930s resulted in the mass killing of millions of them in the 1940s. In our day, who will deny that the rash of black church building fires in our country is not at least partially fueled by the racist accusations made by hateful people? While all hope that accusations made by brethren today would not lead to the bodily harm of those accused, we must admit the possibility in light of the above facts.
4. Such accusations can poison the atmosphere among brethren. We need only look at Paul's relationship with the Corinthians to see that this point is valid. Because of the charges made against Paul by his enemies at Corinth, he was not able to continue with his work of building up the church there. Rather, a large part of his second letter to the

Corinthians was taken up with explanations of his conduct and answers to enemies (cf. 1:12-2:4; 4:2; 7:2; 12:19; chs. 10-12). Brethren can come to believe the worst about their brethren simply by hearing and believing false accusations. Brethren can be motivated by the desire to accuse others (Mark 3:2; John 8:6). False accusations can lead to the severing of relationships among brethren.

Conclusion

Such results as we have listed above ought to cause all to think soberly before blasting off with some wild charge against a brother or believing an accusation made by another. Call the brother in question or write him, seek to build bridges, not to destroy them. Remember, anyone can make false accusations about anyone else. God's people should seek what is true and not be led by idle charges. They should treat others as they would like to be treated (Matt. 7:12) and judge others by their fruits, and not by accusations they have heard (Matt. 7:20; Gal. 2:14). The devil is "the accuser of our brethren." It is bad enough that he is involved in such activity. God's people should want no part of the devil's work.

- Steve Wallace, via Guardian of Truth XLI: 6 p. 20-21, March 20, 1997 [Edited - GFS]

"If it be possible ..."

"If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men." (Rom. 12:8). This passage teaches that it is not always possible to be at peace with all men. "Peace at any price" is a dangerous principle and should not be practiced by Christians. It will sabotage the truth and lead the church into apostasy. As Christians we should be willing to sacrifice opinions to be at peace with all men, but we should never compromise truth and duty. No, not for a minute. We must "earnestly contend for the faith." (Jude 3).

To compromise is to be hypocritical. Someone has said, "I had rather be rudely sincere than to be hypocritically polite." Certainly that statement is in harmony with God's Word, for Paul said, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." (Rom. 12:9).

- *The Instructor*, March, 1964

Is Morality Enough?

To be saved, anyone must live a good life morally, but morality alone will not save anyone. Christ declared that only those who do the will of the Father in heaven (Matt. 7:21) will be

saved, and doing the Father's will includes much more than morality. A true Christian follows the highest moral standard of any; however, if good morals were enough to save a person then Christ died in vain. For he died so that those who OBEY HIM might be saved (Heb. 5:9), and gave His blood to purchase the church. (Acts 20:28). So our good deeds must be done in the church if we expect to be saved by His blood and receive the reward. (1 Cor. 15:58).

There were good men on earth before Christ came, and if that were sufficient to save anyone it would not have been necessary for Him to die. Man could be saved without a Savior and without faith or obedience to Him. Nicodemus was a leader in the leading religion, but Jesus said he must be born again. (John 3:3). The Ethiopian treasurer was a good religious man but was not saved until he obeyed the truth. (Acts 8:26-40). A better man than Cornelius could never be found outside the church. He was a devout man that feared God with all his house, gave much alms and prayed always. (Acts 10). But he wasn't saved until he heard and obeyed the Word of God. (Acts 11:14).

Regardless of how good a man is, everyone sins (Eccl. 7:20) and falls short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:10-23). One man kept the Ten Commandments from the time he was a boy, but even that wasn't enough to save him. (Matt. 19:20). We must obey the truth to have our sins forgiven. (John 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:22). Those who do not obey the gospel will be condemned. (Mk. 16:15-16; 2 Thess. 1:7-9). We are going to be judged by the commands written in the Word of God (John 12:48; Rev. 20:12); not merely by good deeds. Morality is not enough.

- Harold Thurman

- > "To have integrity is to be good when nobody is looking!"
 - > "Be careful of your thoughts; they may become words at any moment!"
 - > "True thanksgiving is a cultivated habit rather than an occasional emphasis!"
 - > "Speak kind words and you will hear kind echoes!"
 - > "An admission of error is a sign of strength rather than a weakness!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*They Abandoned Their Idols There!*" (Text: 2 Sam. 5:17-21); Sunday evening: "*The Great Discovery!*" (John 20:1-18).