

The Deceitfulness of Morality

(Yes....morality!)

Please consider for a moment the trouble a King named Abimelech (King of the nation Gerar) got himself into while behaving in a genuinely upright and moral fashion. And not just trouble, but trouble and condemnation from the Lord, to the point that he almost lost his life. The incident takes place as Abraham is traveling through Gerar, and King Abimelech notices not only Abraham, but also his wife Sarah. Let us read:

Genesis 20:2-7; 17; 18

And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. ³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife." ⁴ Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, "Lord, will you kill an innocent people? ⁵ Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." ⁶ Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. ⁷ Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."..... ¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. ¹⁸ For the LORD had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Usually this passage is read with the actions of Abraham being the focus. Today, let us take a long hard look at the exchange between the Lord and the king. By all accepted standards, King Abimelech was doing nothing wrong! He did not realize Sarah was a married woman. Abimelech was of the understanding that Sarah was a beautiful, young, available woman, and the sister of Abraham. When he took her to be his wife, he conducted himself with all morality and kept his conscience clean. But what was the result? The Lord told him that he was as good as dead! The Lord knew of Abraham's lie, He knew of Abimelech's morality, and yet still he held Abimelech accountable. This is an extremely important truth that must be realized. It is quite possible to sin against God while behaving in a moral fashion and being completely unaware that your actions are wrong. Abimelech had taken another man's wife, and this was wrong. Period. His good intentions and self declared innocence meant nothing. According to verse 18, the king and his household were already suffering the effects of his sin.

So of what value was King Abimelech's morality? It kept his conscience clean and I am sure this allowed him to sleep well at night, but sound sleep was its' only value. Indeed, those nights of restful slumber were nothing to be envied, for the Lord of Hosts had judged him to be worthy of death and the King had no clue. The trust he placed in his morality actually hindered his reconciling with God, until the Lord confronted him directly.

Let us now turn our eye to local areas and the present day, keeping this lesson in mind.

The current Christian sub-culture in the Bible Belt area of the U.S. has promoted morality to a highly vaulted position. We protest if “Happy Holidays” replaces “Merry Christmas” on the posters at the local stores at Christmas time. We march in protest whenever the subject of abortion is addressed at the courts, we listen to Christian radio focusing on the family, and don’t forget the emails! The ten email daily minimum denouncing the latest outrage by an adulterous celebrity, liberal politician or terrorist organization. Truly moral awareness is precious in the Christian sub-culture.

And what is the value of our morality? What has it accomplished and what do we hope it accomplishes? An upright and moral society? One that more closely complies with what is written in the Word of God? Perhaps we hope to see the Ten Commandments honored and set forth as the societal norm for this country? To what value? As King Abimelech learned, morality itself does not set us in right-standing with the Almighty. A more upright society may help us to sleep peacefully at night, but what is the value of this rest if we, like Abimelech while he slept, have already been condemned? May I submit to you that we (individually and as a society) have sinned against the Almighty, and our condemnation has already been declared? Before you dismiss this as a radical and untrue statement, please take a look at some Scriptures (the only trustworthy source of truth):

John 3:18

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Ahhh, I am sure I have just angered many a reader from the South! “That Scripture does not apply to me!” they will protest, “I do believe, I have been a Christian my whole life!” But let me ask you the forbidden question, the taboo of all religious taboos.... Are you sure you are a Christian? Are you sure you are saved? This is not an inappropriate question, nor is it an unbiblical one. The Apostle Paul told us to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith and the Apostle John wrote the book of 1st John to provide test we can give ourselves to see if we have been truly born again into new creatures, adopted as sons and daughters of God. Inspect yourself in the areas laid out in 1st John. Do you continue in sin with no concern or repentance? Do you now hate the sin you once loved? Do you love the company of other believers? Do you hurt when they hurt, and help when your Brother or Sister in Christ is in need? Working toward cultural morality is never given as a proof of the validity of one’s faith. I beg of you to prayerfully read 1st John and ask God to open your eyes and to bring you either assurance or conviction.

I submit to you that the higher moral standards (comparatively) of the Christian sub-culture has blinded many, many people to the fact that they aren’t even saved themselves. In fact, the enthusiastic defense of high moral standards might even be a sign of a false conversion! How can I say something so seemingly preposterous? Actually, very easily. Jesus Christ made it quite clear what message His followers are to proclaim and defend. It is the Gospel. Look at what we are told to preach and defend:

Repentance and the forgiveness of sins	Luke 24:47
Go into all the world and preach the Gospel	Mark 16:15
Contend earnestly for the faith	Jude 1:3

Yet what message is the American church, Christian radio & our sub-culture so enthusiastically promoting? Almost unanimously, the messages are concerning moral discussions, political movements, current events & self-help (so you can be more moral). In short... Morality; and morality is not the Gospel.

As indicated in the above Scripture references, we are told to preach the Gospel to every creature. But as individuals and as a Church, we do not. Individually speaking, surveys say only 2% of those claiming Christianity have ever shared their faith. Collectively speaking, almost all messages in today's Churches are calls to accept Jesus into your heart (a message found nowhere in Scripture) because He loves you and wants to bless you (no mention of repentance) and help you through life (no mention of accepting His Lordship and serving Him instead of yourself). In short, the message preached in the vast majority of Churches and on Christian radio is *not* the Gospel! It is a call to friendship with a loving Grandpa/Santa Claus in the sky who will be there to help you, would never condemn you, and will merely wink at sin on the final day. This is not the God of the Bible, and this is not the Gospel. So what would Jesus say about our complete and utter failure to do what He commanded?

Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?
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Luke 6:46

and...

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Matthew 7:21-23

The continued abandonment, individually and corporately, of the proclamation of the true Gospel in favor of a message of morality is to continue in sin. According to John, continuing in rebellion is a trademark of the unconverted, to matter how religious the rebellion may appear. I know it is a serious charge, but it is true. To have morality, prosperity and self-help as the focus of the Church is to walk in rebellion, and rebellion is a sin that is actually equated with witchcraft in 1 Samuel 15:23.

Morality is so deceptive. We feel as though we are doing good! We feel as though God approves and encourages our efforts. Surely Jesus would protest outside the abortion clinic with us if He were here, wouldn't He? Well, actually we know exactly what Jesus would do were He here. He would do the same thing that His Apostles who were walking in obedience to His commands were doing. Preaching the Gospel. The true Gospel. The good news that walking dead men, people already condemned for breaking God's Holy law, can be made right in the sight of God. The incredible truth that Jesus Christ, God in flesh, died on the Cross taking the punishment that rightfully belongs to us, that whoever repents of their sins, believes on Him, and follows Him as Lord will be given eternal life. He would be setting captives free. Free from the sin that once held them slaves by making them new creations, and giving them a new heart that is obedient and responsive to Him. What incredible, astounding, liberating news!! This Gospel that states you don't have to do good works and have high morality to be saved!! This mind boggling truth that after being saved you will have high morals and you will do good works because He has made you into a new creature.

That these good works that are burdensome now will become natural and enjoyable, and will even be the proof that you have been redeemed. How could any message be sweeter to the ear or more comforting to the spirit than the true Gospel of Jesus Christ? And yet we almost never hear it. Morality is the message of the day. Morality does indeed follow true conversion, but when it is put in front of conversion, it becomes a deceptive lie. And in the South more than anywhere else, morality is softly signing its' deceptive lullaby to millions, putting them into a blissful sleep so they will be fully rested for an eternity in torment.

Folks, before ending this article may I point out that what morality King Abimelech did possess, came from God and not from his own heart or strength. The Lord told Abimelech, "It was I who kept you from sinning against me." The morality we so take so much pride in isn't even our own. It is the restraining hand of God on a sinful people. It is in His mercy that He brings us some restraint so that we do not plunge headlong into the sins that we entertain in our thoughts and in our fantasies. It is in His grace and restraint that we have time to hear from Him, and to consider His message urging us to repent. The Lord gave King Abimelech a morality that bought him some time, and then reached out to the King with a message to repent. You too have some morality given to you by God. Has it been given to you for the purpose of giving you time until you have received your own message, urging you to repent? Have you not just received that message?

Do not be like the religious man who was at Church, giving God thanks that he had not fallen into the sinful lifestyle of those around him. Fully recognizing that it was through the grace of God that he was the moral man that he was, and even making a trip to the Church to specifically give thanks to God for the divine restraint that he had been blessed with. There was absolutely nothing wrong with recognizing this truth, and it was wholly appropriate to give God thanks. So where did this man make a horrible error that condemned him to Hell? In getting up and going on his way, taking pride in this God given morality, and thinking it had saved Him. Read about him in Luke 18:10-14. Salvation comes only through throwing yourself on the mercy of God, clinging to the Cross of Christ through faith. Examine yourself in the light of Scripture to make sure you are in the faith and not following this man and a moral culture straight to the grave.

For those of you reading this that are truly redeemed... go preach the Gospel!
For those of you who are simply moral... it is time to repent. Today is the day of salvation!