

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

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Living Soberly, Righteously, And Godly

By Everett Hardin

The world in which we live is morally deteriorating. Behavior and actions that once were rarely mentioned in public, except to condemn, are now openly discussed, joked about and promoted. We are living in a world where the will of God is dishonored by many people.

God has one standard of morality. God's word is found in the Bible and the Bible only. His standard is one of righteousness. *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world"* (Titus 2:11-12). This passage tells us what to reject and to practice. Ungodliness and worldly lusts are not proper standards for Christians; the principles of sobriety, righteousness, and godliness are proper standards. We now note various forms of immorality that are present in the world and how Satan works to promote these immoral acts.

Homosexuality

When we speak about the sin of homosexuality, we speak of that which is sinful. Nowhere in the Bible is it ever categorized as righteousness. God created man and woman for one another (Gen. 2:18-24). Paul condemned homosexuality. *"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet"* (Rom. 1:26-27). *"Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind; it is abomination"* (Lev. 18:22). *"There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel"* (Deut. 23:17). Those living in Sodom and Gomorrah were practicing the sin of homosexuality (Gen. 2:18-24; Gen. 18:20; 19:1-6; Jude 7). Abraham

said, “*Would you destroy the righteous with the wicked*” (Gen. 18:23 if “ten” righteous could be found (Gen. 18:32). Ten wicked could be found, but not ten righteous! “*Salvation is far from the wicked; for they seek not thy statutes*” (Ps. 119:155).

The Sin Of Adultery

The sanctity of marriage is disregarded by people of all economic, social, geographical, and religious backgrounds. The worldly act as if it is no sin at all. God’s attitude toward divorce is clearly this: “*For the Lord the God of Israel. Saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts; therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously*” against “*the wife of thy youth*” (Mal. 2:15, 16). It is a departure from His righteous will, and He allows it only under the most extreme circumstances. Jesus taught that a person who divorces a mate for some trivial cause (i.e., for a reason other than fornication) is guilty if he marries again. This is the general rule (Luke 16:18). Jesus also taught that one who divorces a mate who is a fornicator is an exception to the general rule. “*And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, **except it be for fornication**, and shall marry another; commits adultery*” (Matt. 19:9). Read Jesus’ statement without the “exceptive clause” and the point is clear. With the “exceptive clause” inserted it deals with the action of a person who is putting one away. It is the offended party who is under consideration in the exception. The guilty party in a divorce for fornication does not have the right of remarriage because he does not have the cause that bestows that right. Divorcing your mate without a scriptural cause and marrying another is a sin” (Rom.7:2-3).

Drunkenness

What are the effects of drinking alcoholic beverages? Millions of men and women are directly affected in their home. The carnage on the highway, due to the drinking of alcohol is evident. Many have lost their job due to the effects of drinking alcohol. Thousands of mothers, wives, sweethearts, and children are raped by men under the influence of alcohol. In spite of thousands of others who are murdered, robbed, and maimed by users of alcoholic beverages, the pushers have little or no restraint. The prophet said, “*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness*” (Hab. 2:15).

Alcoholic beverage destroys. “*For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, **excess of wine**, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries*” (I Pet. 4:3). Proverbs warns of the dangers of alcoholic consumption. “*Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder*” (Prov. 23:29-32). God-fearing people ought not to look on or use wine after it has gone through the process of fermentation. Alcoholic beverages, whether wine, beer, or whisky, are a curse on any nation and enslaves millions and promotes crime and violence.

Immodest Dress

The human body is not evil; it was declared “*very good*” (Gen. 1:31). “*And they were both naked, the man and his wife and were not ashamed*” (Gen. 2:25). Then came the fall of Adam and Eve. They listened to the false counsel of Satan and rebelled against God’s authority. When God came to Adam and Eve, after their sin, He did not tell them to take off their leaf aprons so as to “recapture their innocence.” He indicated that they needed **more** clothing. “*Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skin and clothed them*” (Gen. 3:21).

Our situation in America with regard to fashion and the flaunting of flesh is a manifestation of man’s rebellion against God. We are told that “nudity is nice.” Clothes are advertised to be “daring,” “sexy,” “naughty and slightly wicked.” This is the way of a sinful and perverse people. Paul gives special instruction to women in I Timothy 2:9. “*In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel with shamefacedness and sobriety.*” One’s dress is a mirror of the heart. Paul urged that a Christian woman not show herself to be carnal and frivolous by her apparel. Instead, let her show her purity of heart with modest dress. Dress in good taste and appropriate for the situation, but never allow the world to set a fashion for you that involves the immoral and indecent.

Gambling

The sin of gambling comes in many forms. Casino gambling, wagering on horse and dog races, state lotteries, raffles, bingo games, and employees in business or office betting on the outcome of various sports events are ways that this sin is committed today. What then is gambling? It is the creation of an unnecessary risk in the hope of gaining something for nothing and with no prospect of producing anything for the general good of man.

There are three legitimate means of transferring money: (1) The law of labor; money is paid and earned by effort expended, (2) The law of exchange; a commodity is exchanged for its value in money, and (3) The law of love, where money is given without any expectation or desire for any return. Gambling does not involve gain by reason of labor (Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:10-13). It does not involve exchange of equal value; it does not involve a gift with no desire of return. The gambler is a parasite who seeks gain at the expense of the labor of others. It is essentially covetousness, the excessive desire to have what belongs to another, without exchange of service or money. This disposition of mind is condemned (Col. 3:5; I Tim. 6:10; I Thess. 4:11-12).

The fruits of gambling expose it as an evil practice. It attracts the criminal element, and produces broken homes, theft, drinking, suicide, and murder. Fine citizens and family men have become paupers, embezzlers, and suicidal because of the enticement of the gambling table. Jesus said, “*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them*” (Matt.7:18-20). Gambling becomes overpowering, a self-inflicted disease. It is inherently wrong.

Pornography

Our society is faced with the great problem of pornography and obscene literature. Immoral pictures and suggestive stories have their effect upon all who relish such, for they are designed to create within one unlawful desires. Sinful thought can become an established pattern (Gen. 6:5). The presence of this evil will keep men from aiming at the purity of heart enjoined by Jesus in Mathew 5:8. To allow our hearts to become mixed up with evils of a sinful world is detrimental to character, attitude, and feelings of right and wrong. Pornography defiles the mind of man by polluting it with impure and unholy thoughts. Our thinking is to be true, honest, just, pure, and lovely (Phil. 4:8).

Pornography is condemned as lasciviousness (Gal. 5:19). Lasciviousness is defined as

(1) lewd, lustful, (2) Tending to produce lewd emotions.” The men and women who prostitute themselves for money and the people who leer and lust over them all are exploiting their fellow human beings whose bodies were created to nobly serve their Creator. Pornography attacks the institution of marriage by encouraging promiscuity and infidelity. *“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whore mongers and adulterers God will judge”* (Heb. 13:4).

We should not tolerate these sins. They ought to be exposed as sin and the brethren warned about their destructive nature. Those who refuse to heed the warnings and rebukes should be disciplined for their own good and the good of the congregation (I Cor. 5:2; 2 Thess. 3:6-14). We must not cease to warn them. *“Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Prov. 14:24)
