

Four Reasons To Practice Christian Morality

I Corinthians 6:1-8a, 11, 13b-20

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I. The Church's Image: The Negative Side. I Cor. 6:1-8

After attending a church service a dentist said to the pastor, "I cannot attend your church again." When the pastor asked why, the dentist said, "One of your members was singing praises to God through teeth she refused to pay for." Unpaid bills can bring shame to God and His work.

Croft M. Pentz

"What is your business?" or, "What are you driving at?" is the question that shapes everything about our lives. It forms our habits, chooses our friends, and determines the road we will take. If you meet a man with his fishing-rod on his shoulder, you do not need to ask him what he is seeking. You do not wonder if he is not going out to pick grapes. I believe that each one of us carries about us that which proclaims the object that we have in view. A man who goes into the mines dressed like a miner, and with a pick on his shoulder, may say that he is merely going to look at the scenery, but nobody will believe him. So, if we are dressed in the garments of the world and persist in hanging about its quarters, the fact that we call ourselves Christians is not going to carry much weight with it.

Through its laws, our country declares it a crime to lie about the contents in a box of cereal. These laws demand that the outside of the package tell the truth about what is on the inside. Deceptive packaging is illegal. "Truth in advertising" regulations are another way to protect the public. A good example of this is the warning on a pack of cigarettes: "Smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema, and may complicate pregnancy." Unfortunately, there are no such laws about people. We require no one to tell what really lies behind the packaging--the clothes, facial expressions, mannerisms, speech patterns, or affected behavior. No one is forced to tell you what he or she is really feeling, thinking, or planning to do.

Our deceptive packaging--the way we appear to others--is an accepted, even an expected part of our way of life. We have become experts in this type of trickery. Before we are going to get the help we need, we need to confess this sin of hypocrisy. Only then can we go on the path of discovering and knowing our real selves.

II. The Church's Image: The Positive Side. I Cor. 6:9-11

Have you noticed the new design of the \$100 bill? The Treasury Department tells us that counterfeit bills have become such a problem, a completely new design was necessary to combat the copycats. The new bill looks so much different from the old, it can easily be mistaken for "play-money," however it contains a high-tech watermark, and other features that should prove difficult to duplicate. Counterfeit dollars have always been in circulation in this country; yet, no one has ever refused real money just because counterfeit money is abroad. Nothing can be more foolish than the excuse which some people give for not becoming Christians. They say that so many professors of Christianity are hypocrites that therefore they will stay out altogether. While there is now and then a counterfeit life, it remains true that the life of Jesus is ever the same divine and holy career, and for every counterfeit Christian there are many whose lives ring out true every time. Men would not counterfeit \$100 bills if real bills of that denomination were not abundant and valuable; so men would not counterfeit Christianity if it were not so precious a thing.

While holding meetings in Egypt among some soldiers I asked a big sergeant in a Highland regiment how he was brought to Christ. His answer was: "There is a private in our company who was converted in Malta before the regiment came on to Egypt. We gave that fellow an awful time. One night he came in from sentry duty, very tired and set, and before going to bed he got down to pray. I struck him on the side of his head with my boots, and he just went on with his prayers. Next morning I found my boots beautifully polished by the side of my bed. That was his reply to me. It just broke my heart, and I was saved that day."

--Rev. J. Stuart Holden

Hezekiah Butterworth, in writing about the Christian faith of Abraham Lincoln, tells this story: "One day Mr. Lincoln met an army nurse, a woman of true Christian character. 'I have a question to ask you,' he said, in effect. 'What is a religious experience?' It was the most important question that one can ask in the world. The

woman answered: 'It is to feel one's need of divine help and cast one's self on God in perfect trust and know his presence,' or words to that effect. 'Then I have it,' he answered. 'I have it, and I intend to make a public profession of it.' About the same time, or later, he said to Harriet Beecher Stowe: 'When I entered the White House I was not a Christian. Now I am a Christian.' In this period of divine trust he made a vow to God to free the slaves by a proclamation. At a cabinet meeting he said: 'The time has come to issue a proclamation of emancipation; the people are ready for it, and I promised God on my knees I would do it.' "

III. The Four Guidelines for Morality. I Cor. 6:12-20

In the humorous little book *Children's Letters to God*, one little girl was quite concerned about her dad's salvation. Anita wrote, "Dear God, Is it true my father won't get to heaven if he uses his bowling words in the house?"

- *Children's Letters to God*, Stuart Hample & Eric Marshall, 1991, Letter 6
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