

The Severity of Minimizing His Severity

We human beings must constantly guard against the subtle temptation to trivialize and re-fashion God into some semblance of deity that fits our expectations and serves our desires. There is pressure from the world and the flesh to reduce God to a more manageable deity, or view Him in some way that makes Him more congenial and serviceable. We can drift away from the Biblical concept of God and Christ, and gradually develop a warped and humanistic view of God and His authority. One man called this "the dangerous illusion of a manageable deity."

Some theologians and religious writers on the contemporary scene attempt in every way they can, to deny or minimize the "severity" of God. They are playing into the hands of those who wish to reject the "severity" of God because of the moral implications of that sternness. There are many that nurture an unconfessed fear, that if they accept the "severity" of God or acknowledge His wrath, this will imply certain moral demands they find distasteful.

To be more specific, if I'm involved in adultery and desire to continue in that sin, I am comforted (deceived) by the notion that God is not severe; that He can overlook my sin or look the other way while I practice it. By the same token, if I'm participating in stealing for a living (or for fun ... doesn't matter), the concept of a severe God who punishes sin will not be agreeable. Thus, the temptation to "re-think" and revise our view of God, depending upon our involvements in daily life; that is, our involvements which run counter to divine legislation.

Isn't it clear, that so many people begin with their own behavior and that which they desire to do --- and from there they reason out their concept of God? So, their ideas of God are based on WHAT THEY DESIRE rather than WHAT IS REVEALED. What they think about God is what they want to think rather than what the Bible teaches. What we need to do is this: BEGIN WITH THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF GOD (THE TRUTH), AND ON THAT BASIS LET OUR THOUGHTS, WORDS AND DEEDS BE FORMED! Then re-shape and revise our behavior, not our concept of God.

One facet of God's character many do not readily accept is: HE IS "A JEALOUS AND AVENGING GOD!" The book of Nahum decreed punishment against the people of Ninevah (about 150 years after they repented at Jonah's preaching). The prophecy begins: "The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord takes vengeance on His foes and maintains His wrath against His enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished," (Nahum 1:2-3). Other passages likewise teach, the jealousy of God (see Ex. 20:5; Deut. 29:20; Psa. 78:58; Ezek. 36:5).

Now it must be said, this jealousy is not a jealousy that is tainted with sin. So often, the jealousy of man is tainted with or is productive of sin. But in no sense is God's jealousy explosive or irrational. Never does this divine disposition border on caprice or evil. It simply has to do with the fact, GOD CANNOT ABIDE THE PRESENCE OF SIN; and He cannot merely ignore unfaithfulness to Himself.

To husbands I would ask: WHAT IF YOUR WIFE STARTED PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO OTHER MEN, WHILE SLIGHTING YOU? Would you merely ignore that? Would your attitude be: "Well, I am a man of love and compassion ... it's all right!"

To wives I would direct the same inquiry: WHAT IF YOUR HUSBAND STARTED LOOKING AT, LUSTING AFTER AND SPENDING TIME WITH OTHER WOMEN, WHILE SLIGHTING YOU? Would you allow or tolerate this?

Likewise, when people ignore God and worship men ... when people who should be following God's law, invent their own law or become a law unto themselves ... when God's people thumb their nose at God, and fall in love with the world ... when we labor to develop loop-hole arguments and theories to justify our sin -- GOD'S VERY CHARACTER CRIES OUT FOR VENGEANCE. For He is "a jealous and avenging God."

"Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God; on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off," (Rom. 11:22).

- by Warren Berkley

No Problem

When a person is eager to learn the way of salvation and is willing to accept the word of God as the final authority, there is no problem in teaching him what to do to be saved.

When differences arise among brethren and all have a humble attitude, and there is a sincere desire for peace and unity, and all parties want to follow God's word, the settlement is no problem.

When a person genuinely believes that Jesus is the Son of God and wants to yield in submission to Christ, once he is shown the Lord commands baptism for the remission of sins, because he is honest and longs to go to heaven, there is no problem getting him to be baptized.

When a worshiper comes into the assembly with the right attitude of heart, there is no problem if the song leader misses the pitch on one of the hymns or if the building is too warm, or if the janitor has missed some cobwebs over the pulpit.

Many of the problems that arise are the bitter fruit of improper thinking.

- by Irvin Himmel

What About Gambling?

A Gallop poll indicated that over 60% of the US population gambles regularly. More than 80% approve of legal gambling. 44 states now have lotteries. More and more we hear of Christians who gamble. Many fall to the temptation of these lotteries. Others bet on horses, athletic events, etc. Far too many participate in raffles, office "pools", and other forms of gambling. What does God say about all of this?

The Bible never uses the words "gamble" or "gambling," but it clearly sets forth principles that condemn the practice. Gambling is a SIN because:

1. It is addictive. The very fact that there is an organization called "Gamblers Anonymous" proves this point. Christians are not to be "brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6:12).

2. It is covetousness. It displays an inordinate desire to gain without giving something of equal value. It aims to gain at the expense of others. (Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:10).

3. It violates the principles of love and the "golden rule." Someone once described gambling as "stealing by consent." In order for there to be winners, there must necessarily be losers (Matt. 22:39; 1 Cor. 10:24; Matt. 7:12).

4. It is bad stewardship. A very casual study of the "odds" proves that you have a much higher percentage chance of losing than winning. You are literally "throwing your money away." God, on the other hand, expects us to be good stewards of what we have been given (1 Pet. 4:10).

5. It violates the principle of legitimate transfer of money or property. The Bible outlines three ways in which things of value can be exchanged: by labor (Eph. 4:28), by trade (Acts 4:32-37), or by gift (Matt. 7:11). Gambling fits none of these.

6. It breeds other problems. Much of the crime in our country is linked to gambling in one way or another.

Clearly, Christians should in no way support or participate in gambling.

- by Greg Gwin