

## ***The Lure of the Fashionable (Or, Duplicating Gruesome Reality)***

One index of the reign of sin is the lure of the fashionable. It is remarkable how powerful worldly fashion is to those who are given to this dimension of human appetite. When you do something, without any mature motive or reason - simply because others are doing it, you are captive to the influence of fashion.

I thought about this a few days ago, as a result of something I observed. I came to an intersection and noticed an automobile next to me riddled with bullet holes. It appeared to me that the vehicle had been through a fierce gun battle. There was a sense of alarm at first, so I looked inside the car - only to witness normal occupants who seemed to be in good health. I concluded the necessary auto body work had not been done yet, but I was still alarmed at what had happened to the owners.

A few days later I drove into a parking lot at the grocery store, and here was another vehicle with a dozen or so bullet holes in the driver's door. This caused me to think about the crime rate, the violence that must be growing in my community. What times we must live in, to see automobiles torn up and obviously penetrated by bullets! Terrible!

Then I went to auto parts store to buy an air filter for my truck. While waiting for the employee to find the part, I noticed a display of FAKE BULLET HOLE decals! I caught myself just before uttering the verbal expression of astonishment common in my grandmother's generation: "Of all the thangs!!"

I suppose the explanation is - if you can't get your vehicle shot, you can buy these decals to make it look like you've been shot!! Then I went to Wal-Mart yesterday, and the guy in front of me was wearing a shirt with bullet holes and blood (imprinted on the shirt to duplicate gruesome reality.)

It provoked me to think about what strange things people will do, simply because others do it. This is the lure of fashion, also seen in tattoos and body-piercing. I suppose an argument can be made in favor of custom and convention, or private opinion where no sin is involved. You can study that.

But it may be personally useful for us to stop and inquire of ourselves, before duplicating fashion: Why am I doing this? What good will be accomplished? What message will I send? What influence will I have? Would Jesus do this? Based on His revelation of Himself, what would God's judgment be? Will a mind and conscience, directed by the example of Christ and the teachings of the Bible desire to give the appearance of violence?

Without any doubt, Christians must guard against the impulse and habit of conforming to the world. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." - Rom. 12:1,2

**- by Warren E. Berkley**

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## ***A Time for Growing Men***

The nation was in the midst of the Great Depression and drought in 1930. I was fifteen. My mother and I lived alone on a small West Tennessee farm. We were attempting to scratch out a bare living from a worn-out farm with whatever abilities an ignorant boy, a widowed mother, and one mule and a plow could muster. That fall the rainfall had been so minute that the planter tracks could still be seen.

After a tiring, fruitless day, Mother sat by the coal oil lamp reading of God's love for man. With all the impatience of a teen-age boy, I halted her reading from the thumb-worn Bible with this question: "Mother, you tell me God loves us. He has a funny way of showing it! We have worked our fingers to the bone for the entire growing season, yet we will harvest little from these parched fields. We have done all that we can do. All this soil needs is rain, which only God can send. If God loves us, why doesn't He make it rain?"

With the patience which comes only from faith and years of trials, Mother paused, raised her head from the pages of her beloved Word of God and replied, "Son, you are making a serious mistake. You are assuming that God is interested in growing cotton and corn. He isn't! He can do

that without you and me. God is interested in growing men. I dare say that, in future years, if God grants such to you, you will look back on 1930 as a terrible year for growing corn and cotton. But, if you learn the message God is teaching, you will recall this depression year as a great one for growing men!"

Mother was right. Want teaches what abundance can never know. Without a drought and a mother who understood it, I might never have known 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

- by *Dwayne Laws*

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## ***Callused By Our Culture***

"It doesn't fit my hand!" That was the excuse an old friend would always offer whenever there was a job that required a shovel, rake, or hoe. Well, in reality, such tools don't fit anyone's hand. The evidence of this fact is seen in the soreness and blisters that appear when these implements are first employed. But, if you stick with it, you can get over the irritation. In fact, seasoned workers develop calluses from their prolonged exposure. They no longer feel the pain. Calluses, you see, result in a reduced sensitivity to the things that would normally cause an unpleasant reaction.

There is a spiritual parallel to the scenario we have just described. However, in this realm it is a hurtful rather than helpful phenomenon. It goes like this: A Christian is in repeated contact with the elements of this world. The immorality, violence, vulgarity, immodesty, sensuality and wickedness of society are an affront to his spiritual sensitivities. He is troubled by what he sees -- it hurts him. But, little by little, he begins to grow hardened to this irritation. Oh, yes, he still recognizes sin, but somehow it just does not torture him quite so much when he sees it. At first, for instance, he would turn off a TV program in disgust when sex or bad language was aired. But now, because of his prolonged exposure to such things, he can sit right through it -- taking it all in -- and in the process growing even more callused to the wickedness he sees. Gradually, he demonstrates less and less discretion about the things he sees and hears, about the places he goes, the things he does, the way he talks, the clothes he wears. You see, his very spiritual being has been altered. He has become callused by the evil culture.

Let us all remain sensitive to the evils around us, and join the Psalmist in saying: "From thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way" (Ps. 119:104).

- by *Greg Gwin*