

It Just Slipped Out ... Of What?

When excusing themselves for uttering profanities or curses, the kind of words which should never escape our mouths (Ephesians 4:29), many will say, "I'm sorry; it just slipped out". But what did those corrupt words slip out of, exactly? Jesus explained, "*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things*" (Matthew 12:34-35). That is to say, bad words don't "slip out" of good hearts; they come from bad hearts. Therefore, "*Purify your hearts!*" (James 4:8).

- by Bryan Matthew Dockens

Those 'Limited' New Testament Churches

You don't read of the church in Jerusalem building a gymnasium. There is no evidence the church at Antioch had a softball diamond. According to the New Testament, the church at Philippi never had a pizza party. The church at Thessalonica is never said to have conducted a sewing or exercise class. Then how did those poor, limited churches ever do any good in evangelism?

According to the philosophy of most modern religious groups, the world must be enticed with recreational and social programs. It is through these services that souls can be reached and saved. There is a problem with this thinking - it has no foundation in the Bible.

The church at Jerusalem converted lost souls and grew rapidly (Acts 5:14; 6:7). The church at Antioch had a great impact on its community with the gospel and it also sent out preachers to convert the lost in other places (Acts 11:20-26). The church at Thessalonica, in spite of intense persecution, prospered to the point that they were an example to other churches (Acts 17:1-4; I Thessalonians 1:6-9). Yet, there is not one shred of evidence from divine history that they were successful because of recreational and social programs. One might argue the times have changed. Yes and no. The Greco-Roman culture loved its entertainment and athletic competition as much as our own. Gymnasiums and coliseums could be found in any of the major cities. Plays were common place. Why then didn't the New Testament churches seize upon these activities for mediums for the gospel? Because the Lord never wanted them to do it!

The Lord Jesus is still head of His body, the church, and His commandments are the same. His method for spreading the gospel is summed up in Philippians 2:15-16 "*...that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life...*" It is when Christ's people live the gospel and preach the gospel that we do the Lord's work the Lord's way. Any other method is without Christ's approval and His blessings. Thus, any other method is, in the long run, doomed to fail.

- by Philip Mullins

How Many Roads Lead to Heaven?

On a map you can see many roads into any major city. If you want to get there, you can pick whatever route suits you. Many people think the same thing about variety among churches -- "We're all on different roads to the same place," they say. Can such a thing be so?

Do you believe we can follow different roads? What does the Bible say about it? The Bible speaks of only two roads. In Mt. 7:13-14, Jesus said, "...the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." Yes, there are different roads, but only one goes to Heaven, and it is narrow.

In John 4, when the woman at the well met Jesus, she immediately pointed out that her people worshipped differently from His (4:19-20). Jesus did not reply that both roads led to the same place -- He said that one road was right and the other was wrong (4:22), and that if she wished to please God, her worship must be "in truth" (4:24).

In Acts 15:1-31, the apostles disputed with some who believed in Jesus but taught error about what one must do to be saved. Instead of concluding that there were different roads, they gave notice to the churches that one road was right and the other was wrong.

The idea of "different roads" is used to avoid discussing different religious teachings and practices. After all, does doctrine really matter if your attitude is right? Indeed it does. The Bible says that there are doctrines that God hates (Rev 2:15), and that some doctrines are of demons (1 Tim 4:1). Taking heed to doctrine is necessary for salvation (1 Tim 4:16, 2 Jn 9), because obedience to God's "form of doctrine" is what makes one free from sin (Rom 6:17-18). Even many who believe in Jesus are on the wrong road because they do not obey (Lk 6:46, Mt 7:21-23).

Multiple roads result when men choose their own ways, but only God's way is right. The "different roads" philosophy has led churches to abandon the question of what is right, and instead accept a wide diversity of belief. But we should not be ashamed to say that some beliefs are right, and others are wrong, because that is what God says. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 14:12). If people are on different roads, they are not all headed for Heaven.

- by Erin Percell

Making Plans...

Have you made any definite plans for your spiritual life and for your service to God? We spend time prioritizing our personal lives and setting goals in our careers, but do we think in those terms about the most important thing -- our soul?

Ask yourself these questions:

- What am I planning to do for God today?
- In the coming week, what good things will I accomplish for Him?
- At this time next year, where do I want to be in my spiritual life?
- Five years from now, how will I have changed, improved and grown in my work for God?
- Ten years from today, how will my family be? How will I have helped them to grow spiritually?
- Twenty years down the road, how will I be doing?
- As I approach death, what will have been the most important things in my life?
- Where will I be in eternity?

Philippians 3:12-14 NASV *"Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

- by Greg Gwin