

## ***The First One to Plead His Cause Seems Right***

*"The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him"* (Proverbs 18:17).

Wise Solomon observed the reflexive tendency on the part of man to accept as truth the first version of events presented in a potential controversy.

When gossip circulates through the workplace, the neighborhood, or even the church, the first version of events is usually presumed to be true. This is so because *"The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body"* (Proverbs 18:8). Just as a well prepared meal will go untouched by a child who has spoiled his dinner with a bag of candy, similarly the truth holds no interest for those willing to accept rumors. The "other side of the story" may never be heard, and even when it is, it is often disregarded as a weak defense against the supposed facts already established in everyone's minds.

For this reason, it is imperative to refrain from spreading rumors in the first place. *"Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases"* (Proverbs 26:20).

God commanded, *"You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people"* (Leviticus 19:16). The behavior of a "busybody" is described as "disorderly" (II Thessalonians 3:11) because *"gossips and busybodies"* are those who say *"things which they ought not"* (I Timothy 5:13). And, Paul exposed the wickedness of "whisperings" (Romans 1:29; II Corinthians 12:20) insomuch as gossip thrives on whispers while the truth demands an open hearing.

When a dispute must be resolved, both accounts deserve fair consideration. The Pharisees opposed Jesus, but Nicodemus correctly asked, *"Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?"* (John 7:51). The will of God in such cases is plain: *"Test all things; hold fast what is good"* (I Thessalonians 5:21), for *"He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him"* (Proverbs 18:13).

- by Bryan Matthew Dockens

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## ***What is Tolerated Today Becomes Accepted Tomorrow***

Many years ago I read a quote that I found it to be true. This was the quote: "What is tolerated today becomes accepted tomorrow." Whoever said that said a mouthful and hit the nail on the head. Let me give a couple of examples.

In 1939 a movie was made that had one curse word in it. History tells all that moral leaders and church pulpits all over our country raised a sustained cry against it being released for public showing and almost succeeded in their efforts. However, Hollywood turned a deaf ear to the protests and patiently waited until the hubbub died down. After the protest became old news, Hollywood released the picture, *Gone With The Wind*. Forty years later, in 1979, Hollywood produced and released a movie that had only one curse word in it (the same word used in *Gone With The Wind*) and parents all over the land breathed a sigh of relief and said, "Finally a movie that we can let our children go see." It was *Star Wars*. This gradual "toleration creep" has led to most of the movies released today being filled with vile, filthy language that would have made drunken sailor blush in 1939!

In 1953, a new magazine was about to be released for publication and a volcanic protest by churches and various organizations erupted. The publisher and court officials turned a deaf ear to the protests and, hence, "Play Boy" magazine became an American institution. This led to publications of similar magazines. This, in turn, motivated Hollywood to begin releasing movies of a vivid sexual nature which led to the necessitation of a rating system. Over time there has been "rating creep" so that what used to be X rated is now R rated, R rated is now PG 13 rated and PG13 is now rated G. The slow graduation of "Toleration Creep" has desensitized us to the point we are now accepting as O.K. that was tolerated with anxious misgivings a few years ago.

Sadly, many Christians have become so desensitized to this media filth that they, with their money and attendance, have succumbed to this "wile" of the devil. God tells us through the apostle Paul *"...do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but, instead, expose them"* (Ephesians 5:11).

It is sad to see many Christians (even though it bothers them) allowing their children to watch TV programs and movies that promote this moral filth. The danger for their children, for the most part, is that they will feel it is acceptable for Christians to do this because their parents did not speak out against it or restrict them from involving themselves with this moral tragedy when they were in their formative years. Sadly, in some cases, the children learn by example when they see their parents rent or buy these movies and play them on their DVD sets at home. *"Be not deceived, for whatsoever we sow that is what we shall reap"* (Galatians 6:7,8). Brethren, young and old, let us take the high road of God and take a stand against these things. Let's not succumb to this Moral Creep. Beware, it is a device of the Devil to ensnare our souls.

**- by Dick Millwee**

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### ***"He Beareth Not The Sword In Vain"***

Whenever the news media carries a story about the execution of a criminal there is typically coverage of protest groups that assemble to voice opposition to the practice of capital punishment. This is true even in instances where the convicted criminals were found guilty of horrible and repeated offenses.

What is particularly surprising about these protests is that they are often conducted in the name of 'religion.' Representatives of various denominations will be present to argue that capital punishment is contrary to God's will. We believe they are sadly mistaken.

Romans 13:1-7 discusses the God-given role of civil governments. They are "ordained of God" for the purpose of "executing wrath upon him that doeth evil." In this context it specifically states that "he beareth not the sword in vain" (vs. 4). No clearer reference to the act of execution could have been given by inspiration.

When the apostle Paul was defending himself against false charges he said: "If I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar" (Acts 25:11). His statement obviously implies that he (as an inspired apostle) understood and accepted the concept of capital punishment.

In light of these clear references, we wonder how any person can reject the concept of capital punishment on religious grounds.

**- by Greg Gwin**