

PASTOR'S REPORT



PUBLISHED BY THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

VOL 2 NO 26

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

JULY 17, 1978

GOSSIP AND ACCUSATION MUST STOP!

Preface by God's Apostle

Perhaps the number one problem -- yes and even the number one and most prevalent SIN in God's Church today is careless GOSSIP and rumor spreading. Whether or not realized, it often becomes accusation and slander.

If a hostile student demonstration, such as organized and promoted by Communists, had appeared on the Ambassador Campus I would have made it my business to identify the leader, and get rid of him. Once such activity loses its leadership the followers disintegrate. It's the same on our problem of rumors -- especially those ugly rumors that discredit and accuse -- actually, perhaps unrealized, a form of character assassination!

I fully realize that often this is mere carelessness -- a sort of thinking through the mouth -- with no deliberate intention to harm. But it does harm! And sometimes it is intended to harm!

The subject came up in a conversation with Dave Antion. At my request he has prepared the following memorandum on GOD'S LAW covering this subject.

This sort of thing must be stamped out of God's Church. Our Leader and HEAD of the Church, Jesus Christ, is turning God's Church around, though He uses His human servant in so doing.

However, because 1) we have perhaps carelessly neglected emphatic teaching on this subject, and 2) much of such gossip or rumor has probably been done carelessly without full realization of the seriousness or consequences of it, I decided to withhold direct and definite punitive correction or corrective action, until this thing has been emphasized by the ministry, and in print, before the membership.

First, therefore, I assign it to each of you to preach on this subject, and we will also try to reach the brethren through the GOOD NEWS. I realize that even many of us, including myself, may have been guilty of this through carelessness, thoughtlessness, or neglect. I have decided, therefore, that first we must put emphatic emphasis on this matter in teachings, sermons and articles.

But this is to be followed by DIRECT ACTION, seeking out the SOURCE -- the one who started the rumor, false accusation or whatever, and then making an example of that person, if necessary, before the local Church or the whole Church. I feel that this is CHRIST'S WAY

of stamping out this evil from God's Church, and I act, therefore, in His name.

Following is Mr. Antion's memo to me on this subject. PLEASE BE SURE TO USE THIS AS SERMON MATERIAL.



To: Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong
From: David L. Antion
Date: July 14, 1978

Here is the memo you asked me to write when I was in your office last Friday. It is on the subject of what God's Law has to say about false witnesses and accusations.

As you have taught for many years, the statutes of Scriptures are derived from the GREAT LAWS of God in the Ten Commandments. The ninth commandment -- "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" -- is the basis for the other statutes and judgments in this category in the Bible.

Most people assume that the ninth commandment is only against lying. Though it does cover lying (Rev. 21:8; Col. 3:9) it is mainly against false accusations made against another!

You have also taught that the main object of the last six commandments is love of one's neighbor (Rom. 13:9-10). And the ninth command forbids uttering false witness against one's neighbor -- thus harming him. The Moffatt and the New English Bible say, "You shall not give false evidence ... (against your neighbor)."

Does God consider it a light thing for a man to falsely accuse his neighbor (brother) ??

And what about Jesus' words: "Judge not that ye be not judged"? We know that we can judge a person's actions whether they be in conformity or not with God's law. But can we judge his heart?

"But why dost thou judge thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10). And in verse 13, "Let us not therefore judge one another any more."

The apostle James must have had trouble with judging and accusing in his day, for he writes: "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who are thou that judgest another?" (James 4:11-12.)

Those who would speak evil of others and judge their brothers are in reality judging the law and speaking evil of GOD'S LAW! And like you have said, "The one who accuses is usually guilty of the very thing he accuses others of."

If a minister got up in the pulpit and spoke evil of the law of God (which is holy, just and good), he would be dismissed from the ministry! But what happens to him if he judges the intent, thoughts and beliefs of his brother?

For too long God's Work and God's MINISTRY have been divided BECAUSE OF FALSE ACCUSATIONS AND JUDGING!!! It is time that God's Law be applied and that God's own judgments be enforced against those who judge and falsely accuse!

It was false accusers that got Jesus crucified! Should God's Church house them now? Should it allow false accusers (thus encouraging them in their deeds) to continue their satanic actions??

Many people don't mean or intend to be malicious with their words. They are just careless and neglectful. They say and pass on information without checking it out -- without responsibility!! For some, it is just habit. But God's Law also deals with neglect! And one can forfeit his life through neglect! (See Exodus 21:28-36.)

Sometimes people accuse because they want to get another person in trouble and see him thrown out of his job or the Church!

Whatever the motive -- whether neglect, carelessness or malice -- Jesus' words still ring true: "But I say unto you, that every idle (Moffatt says "careless") word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Mat. 12:36-37).

Another translation says it this way: "I tell you this: there is not a thoughtless word that comes from men's lips but they will have to account for it on the day of judgment" (New English Bible).

BUT WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN TO PEOPLE WHO FALSELY ACCUSE?

HERE IS GOD'S JUDGMENT: (Moffatt translation) "If a malicious witness appears against a man to accuse him of evil-doing, then the two parties in the dispute shall appear before the Eternal, that is, before the priests and the presiding judges; the judges shall investigate the matter carefully, and if it turns out that the witness is malicious and that he has given false witness against his fellow, YOU MUST TREAT HIM AS HE MEANT HIS FELLOW TO BE TREATED; SO SHALL YOU ERADICATE EVIL FROM YOUR MIDST. THE OTHERS SHALL HEAR AND FEAR AND NEVER AGAIN BE GUILTY OF SUCH A SIN" (Deut. 19:16-20).

So then what should happen to the person who makes these accusations?

In the last few years God's Church has been a house divided and filled with this deadly evil. Accusers take verbal rifle shots at

others trying to get them fired or excommunicated or to damage their reputations. But the only thing that happens to the accuser is that he is told he is mistaken! Or if confronted by his intended victim, he apologizes!

He -- the accuser -- risks absolutely nothing! He damages others, almost succeeds in getting them fired, demoted, thrown out of the church, or cast in suspicion, considered untrustworthy, avoided -- or at the very least, causes them to consume enormous amounts of time trying to straighten out the problem and track down the rumor.

But NOTHING happens to the accuser! He is fine -- "alive and well" -- and ready for another try in the future.

One of the worst things about all of this is that often the victim of the accusation doesn't even know that he is being slandered, accused, cast in suspicion, judged! Things are said which may stick in the minds of those who hear. Though no action is taken, these slanders affect the relationship that people have with the accused person. People avoid him. Mistrust him. He is passed over for important jobs or assignments. ALL OF THIS JUST BECAUSE OF A WORD OR TWO SAID CARELESSLY, NEGLECTFULLY OR MALICIOUSLY!!!

Only by applying God's Law -- HIS GOVERNMENT -- to the Church can we rid the Church of this deadly evil. Each one of us must take individual responsibility to live up to the spirit of the law of God, the love of God, which does our neighbor no harm. Only in these ways can we achieve HAPPINESS, PEACE, UNITY AND JOY which God will approve and BLESS in His Church!