

It Is Written

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A Busybody Is A Sinner

By Paul C. Keller

Inasmuch as Jesus died for all (Heb. 2:9) and God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4), it is tragic that any should be lost. Yet, the Bible teaches that many will be lost (Matt. 7:13-14; 22:14). Included among the lost will be many people who had greater opportunities, and hence, greater responsibilities than others. Jesus indicated that "unto whosoever much is given, of him shall much be required" (Lk. 12:41-48), and Peter wrote of some that "it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Pet. 2:20-22). Tragic, indeed, is the case of a person who has had greater opportunities to learn God's will and who has learned it then rebels against it and deliberately walks in disobedience to it, defying the authority of, and willfully pursuing a course known to be contrary to the will of Almighty God! Read Hebrews 10:26-31 carefully and thoughtfully.

Human beings are prone to categorize sins, regarding some greater or lesser than others, and having done this they excuse themselves for the practice of those sins they have decided are lesser sins even deciding that the practice of these is of no consequence in their proper relationship with God. But all sin is serious. It separates men from God (Isa. 59:1,2) and will bar one's entrance into eternal glory (Rev. 21:27). Even one sin is to be regarded as significant and important (Jas. 2:10; Gal. 5:1-4). Hence, all accountable persons need forgiveness. Forgiveness is available only to those who will obey Christ (Matt. 7:21; Rom. 6:16-18; Heb. 5:8,9; Rev. 22:14, etc.). Repentance is ever involved in the obedience the Lord requires (Lk. 13:3; Acts 8:22; 17:30; Rev. 2:5; 2:16; 2:22; 3:3,19, etc.). Whatever the sin, one must repent and turn from it. How dare one go on in impenitent disobedience to God?

One of the sins that some seem to regard lightly and of little consequence is that of being a busybody. *Mark it and mark it well the practice of being a busybody is sinful!* The busybody is a sinner! Such persons need forgiveness, which means that she/he needs to repent and cease the practice!

That being a busybody is a very real and serious danger is evidenced by the fact that New Testament writers warn against it. To Christians Peter wrote, "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters" (1 Pet. 4:15). While we recognize the sinfulness of murder, theft and evildoing, how many consider it sinful to be a busybody? Yet, Peter warns against this right along with these other sins. While a Christian is to be concerned with the spiritual welfare of others there are many things which are one's own business, and with which others have no right to meddle. To be a busybody is to seek to be "the overseer of another's matters not within his province." This, the Christian is warned against.

Yes, a Christian is to be actively concerned with the spiritual welfare of others. He is to be watchful for his brethren and "if any . . . err from the truth" he is to try to "convert him" (Jas. 5:19-20). If a brother is "overtaken in a fault" he is to "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness," at the same time considering himself lest he also be tempted (Gal. 6:1). Christians are to "exhort one another daily" (Heb. 3:13), and are to "warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thess. 5:14). But, a Christian is not to be a busybody. She/he must recognize that there are some personal affairs of others which are none of her/his business! And a Christian should not "poke her/his nose" into such business of others!

Idleness is a stepping-stone to meddlesomeness. It is often true that those who have the least business of their own to attend to are the ones who are so "nosey" about the business of others. Thus, Paul counseled that younger widows should "marry, bear children, guide the house." Unless busy with these worthwhile things "they learn to be idle wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13,14). This principle which is recognized in the Scriptures is also borne out by observation. The woman who spends excessive time on the telephone, maintaining contacts to pry into the personal affairs of others, is never known as a good housekeeper, cook,

seamstress, etc. She and her husband will probably "eat out" for several meals each week at the restaurants, cafeterias, or the fast food outlets. Often, this serves as a double purpose it gives them more time to maintain their "telephone network" and provides them additional opportunities to hear the latest gossip, so they can enlarge their nefarious practice of being busybodies "in other men's matters." Possibly one of the reasons why older women are so often busybodies is that they are no longer occupied with the responsibilities of former years, when their children were at home and they were busy attending the needs of a growing family (although we know some women who were busybodies during all those years as well!). A lack of duties to occupy their time, as was formerly true, may also be a reason why so many older men are busybodies but, of course, some of them were busybodies even then. But the sin of being busybodies is not confined to older men and women. It is altogether too prevalent among those who are younger. And idleness is a factor which so often contributes to it. But, regardless of age, it is wrong to be a busybody. It is sinful and one should repent and cease the practice.

Peter indicates that one's being a busybody brings "suffering" upon himself (1 Pet. 4:15). And surely, this is the case! Nor do we question the justice of it. The busybody suffers the loss of respect of other people. She/he experiences the bitterness of loneliness of feeling "left out" because their meddlesomeness quite naturally causes others to shrink from their company. And while such people may blame others, they brought it on themselves! Someone has well said: "One who is too wise an observer of the business of others, like one who is too curious in observing the labor of bees, will often be stung for his curiosity."

Are you a busybody? If so, you are a sinner. The busybody who does not repent, cease the practice, and comply with God's conditions for forgiveness is as sure of hell as if she/he were already there! This is a blunt statement. It is plain. And it is the truth! Someone has said: "no man ever pries into another man's concerns, but with a design to do, or to be able to do him mischief." This, the Christian must not do.

One can more readily recognize this sin in others than in himself. Each of us needs to make a personal self-examination and eliminate every vestige of this sin from his life. And each of us needs to heed the counsel of the apostle Paul, "And that ye study to be quite, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands" (1 Thess. 4:11). To this end may God bless us.

Closet Praying

By Jim R. Everett

Jesus did not have to have anyone tell Him what was in his or her heart. He knew the hearts of men because of His omniscience (Psalms 139:1-6) -- "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what as in man" (John 2:24-25). There were, however, times when Jesus merely observed the outward behavior of men and drew conclusions based on what was seen. We are also able to see through the facade of appearance by observing behavior. No one is nearly as obscure as he would like to think.

Jesus spoke a parable against those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others (Luke 18:14). The parable depicted two men - the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. By his prayer the Pharisee really made himself quite transparent. The publican also revealed a lot about himself by his posture and words - "would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Had we been at the scene where both men were praying, we would have seen the same things Jesus taught - not by omniscience but by merely observing their behavior.

How much we reveal about ourselves by our prayers! We may habitually utter the same phrases and words we always have, without any thought or feeling. We may speak flowery praises to fill up an appropriate allocated time for prayer. Jesus offered a solution to the public display of prayer -- enter into your closet and pray to God in secret (Matthew 6:6). That was not a prohibition against praying in public -- it was a prohibition against praying with a desire to be seen of men. If we act differently in praying when we are in public than when we pray in private, then prayer becomes a means to self-glorification rather than the means of communication with God.

This is not said to diminish the practice of public praying or to make us critical listeners to others' prayers. It is rather being said to make us conscious of what our praying says about us. Let's be sure to draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22).