

It Is Written

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Evil Suspicions

By Joe Price

Since love "thinks no evil" (keeps no accounts of evil, NKJV footnote), "rejoices in the truth" and "believes all things", we rightly conclude the converse is true of hatred (1 Corinthians 13:5-7). Hate thinks evil of others (keeping an account of wrongs suffered), rejoices in the error of others and refuses to believe good things about others. It is no wonder that "he who does not love his brother abides in death" and, "whoever hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:14-15). Love refuses to hold and express evil suspicions toward others.

Evil suspicions (evil surmisings, KJV) are counted among the sins of the proud, possessed by those obsessed with disputes and arguments (1 Timothy 6:3-4). It is thinking the worst of others (often, deflecting attention away from one's own sins). God will not tolerate such arrogant treatment of others, and neither should we. Therefore, the Holy Spirit instructs Christians to "withdraw yourself" from such people (1 Timothy 6:5).

We can get caught up in speculating about others. This typically leads to gossip and a variety of additional sins. Such speculation and ruinous reasoning is forbidden by the word of God. Let us carefully and correctly identify, put away and avoid the sin of evil suspicion.

1) Evil suspicions draw conclusions on the basis of conjecture and speculation. Whereas love rejoices in the truth and thinks the best of others, the sin of evil suspicions relies on assumptions and the reckless handling of facts. Because it relies on supposition and imagination to draw its conclusions, evil suspicion produces distrust and disputes. Once a person whose heart is full of evil surmising has made up his mind, it becomes very hard for him to reform and renounce his deeply held suspicion. Why? The reason is because pride (a companion of evil surmising) will not allow it (Proverbs 16:18). What a dreadfully ugly sin!

2) Evil suspicions spread contention and division where unity and peace should prevail. Christians are to "seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:11). The gospel teaches us to "pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another", a principle that is not being practiced by one given to evil suspicions (Romans 14:19). Having and acting upon an evil suspicion toward a fellow Christian, spreads an atmosphere of mistrust, doubt and reservation, obscuring the unity we share in Christ (Ephesians 4:1-3).

3) Evil suspicions stifle encouragement. Christians should "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works", but evil suspicion prevents this work of encouragement (Hebrews 10:24). It prevents productive communication instead of enhancing it. Barnabas showed himself to be the son of encouragement by not being suspicious toward Saul and his genuine conversion. He stepped forward and stood with his faithful brother in the Lord (Acts 4:36; 9:26-27). His example is one we all should follow.

4) Evil suspicions wound and ruin rather than soothe and heal. The person consumed with evil suspicions against another is not a peacemaker (Matthew 5:9). Strife and turmoil is the fruit he bears.

5) Put away evil suspicions. Cultivate love by always acting in the best interests of others - regardless of their words and deeds. (This is the true meaning and expression of love, Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10-11.) Judge righteously, not by appearance (John 7:24). Finally, reject baseless suspicions and charges against brethren (cf. 1 Timothy 5:19-20).

What is Repentance?

By Mike Johnson

What is Repentance? This is a crucial question. It is essential to understand the meaning of repentance because repentance is necessary for salvation. In Acts 2:38, Peter told the people they needed to repent (in addition to being baptized) for the remission of sins. Thus, repentance is undoubtedly essential.

There are several words which occur in the original language translated repent. One of these words means sorrow or regret. This word is not the same word found in Acts 2:38. Many people are sorrowful about their sins, but few are willing to repent in the real sense of what repentance is. For example, the Bible tells us that Judas repented (Mt. 27:3) after he betrayed Christ. The word used here, in the original, means sorrow. He did not repent in the sense of what God requires of sinners. Sorrow is involved in repentance, but it is not, within itself, repentance. 2 Corinthians 7:10 tells us that godly sorrow “worketh,” or produces repentance, so “godly sorrow” is not the same thing as repentance.

What then is repentance? The Bible defines it for us. In Matthew 12:41, Jesus referred to what had happened at Nineveh when Jonah preached there. Jesus said that the people of Nineveh repented. Now, what did they do? From Jonah 3:6-8, we see that there was sorrow involved. However, verse ten points out that they “turned from their evil way.” The repentance God requires of us in such passages as Acts 2:38, Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30, and Acts 11:18 means “a change of heart or attitude toward one’s sin that results in a reformation of life.”

There are at least three factors pointed out in the Bible, which can cause repentance. As we have already noted, the first is godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10). A second factor is God’s goodness (Rom. 2:4), while a third factor is the judgment which is to come (Acts 17:30-31)

Repentance is required to become a Christian (Acts 2:38) as well as for the Christian who sins (Acts 8:13, 18-22).

In closing, consider Acts 17:30, which says, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” Have you repented?

Cleaning Out the Barn

By Mark McCrary

Growing up, this was the job I hated the most (and, hated is not too strong a word). Three times a week I had to clean out the feed room in the barn. That includes everything you think would be included. It was a stinky, unpleasant job. I did it because it was my chore to do. I did it because dad made me.

Fast forward 30 years. Saturday afternoon I was feeding the cows for Pop. I finished his instructions, and was about to leave the feed room when I noticed how dirty the floor was. I looked over and saw the shovel to the side and decided to clean the floor for him. I did the same thing that I’d done 30 years ago. It was just as unpleasant. But this time I did it not because I had to, but because I love him.

Obedience to God is kind of like that. Early on in our spiritual life, we obey because we have to; we do what we’re told. Somewhere along the way, though — if you’re really growing — we start obeying because we love him. Tasks that seemed to be so difficult at one point become much more bearable. That’s why — long term — love is a far better motivator in Christian service than fear or obligation.

“If you love me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15).