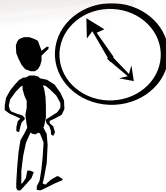


Inside this issue:

<i>Where Will It Stop?</i>	1
<i>What Will Stop It?</i>	
<i>Does the Combine Do It's Job?</i>	3
<i>Doctrinal Matters</i>	5
<i>A.M. Sermon Outline:</i>	6
Paradise	
Duty Rosters	7
Announcements & For the Record	8



Time of Assembly



Every other Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.

OR

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.
Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

Where Will It Stop? What Will Stop It?

By Andy Diestelkamp

For more than half a century, the sexual revolution has promoted freedom from biblical morality. On one hand we have been told that sexual behavior is private and that governments, churches, and others should mind their own business. On the other hand, we are daily confronted with news of people “coming out” and with intense societal pressure to approve of homosexuality. So, which is it? Is homosexual behavior none of our business, or is it everybody’s business to accept, protect, endorse, celebrate, promote, and embrace it?

Why has homosexuality gained such status? Fornication has become an archaic term, but it simply refers to any sexual union outside the context of marriage as defined by God (Heb. 13:4). Fornication comes in many forms. Securing civil rights for one form of fornication while leaving others out seems arbitrary and itself unjust. So, at what point of sexual expression will all of this demand for legitimacy stop? What will stop it?

Many churches have lost all credibility in the fornication debate because of their inconsistency in applying Scripture to practices that are clearly identified as sin. For example, some people—in their efforts to support homosexuality—have routinely called out churches for ignoring the Bible’s teaching on divorce. If Jesus’ teaching on divorce can be ignored or twisted to justify heterosexual relationships, then Jesus’ definition of a God-joined marriage being between a man and a woman (see Matt. 19:4-9) can be just as easily ignored.

When churches tolerate the impenitent heterosexual fornication of their membership, it is impossible to take seriously their opposition to homosexual activity. Hypocrisy is

powerful leverage for immorality to find its way into a church. It leaves a church without moral authority, and immorality will quickly fill that vacuum (cf. 1 Cor. 5). Where will that immorality stop, and what will stop it?

We watch as denomination after denomination succumbs to cultural and social pressures to redefine marriage and approve of homosexual unions. This shows that such organizations may be guided more by a mentality of “majority rules” than by hearts over which “God rules.” Indeed, the very organizational concept of local churches under the oversight of mother churches and/or conferences and man-made creeds is itself without biblical precedent.

While such organizations often form with the motive of clarifying and protecting truth for the purposes of unity, they actually end up promoting division. Likewise, they lend support to the perverse thinking that doctrine is the product of religious tradition or consensus rather than that which was revealed by the inspired apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ through Scripture. Thus, these denominations have their foundations laid on the shifting sand of human wisdom rather than on the rock-solid stability of God’s revealed truth and are, therefore, subject to the shifting winds of pop culture and the storms they bring (cf. Matt. 7:24-27). “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Ps. 127:1). If we forsake Jesus’ teaching as the rock of our lives, then where will apostasy stop, and what will stop it?

Also grievous in these moral debates is the charge by many that hatred is at the center of any opposition. This is a patently false and unfair charge that is readily illustrated. For example, if one is opposed to child abuse, that opposition is not necessarily rooted in hate. It is care and concern for the well-being of the child that is at the root of opposition to child abuse. Similarly, opposition to the abortion of babies is not rooted in hate. It is love and respect for human life that motivates one to be a voice for the voiceless who are being killed. Certainly, we must beware that our passionate stand for justice and morality does not cause us to hate our enemies; but if we cannot oppose anything without being accused of hate speech, then what can be stopped, and how can it be stopped?

Likewise, opposition to homosexuality is being characterized by some as being rooted in hate. For centuries Christians have attempted to make a distinction between hating the sin versus hating the sinner. In the heat of conflict, all of us need to remind ourselves of this. The gospel message is that, though God hates sin, He loves sinners and sent His Son to save us despite our sins (e.g. Rom. 5:8). However, those bent on continuing in their sin despite God’s grace turn deaf ears to this message and this distinction. It matters little to them that people opposed to homosexuality express love for them as sinners while hating their sinful behavior. The warped conclusion of many impenitent sinners is that those who do not validate their sinful choices with acceptance and approval must, therefore, hate them.

Finally, those who have eagerly supported the homosexual agenda have not adequately answered how the arguments and rationale they have used to redefine morality, love, and marriage cannot likewise be used by prostitutes, polygamists, and pedophiles to justify their immorality. The best they can do is to act insulted by the suggestion that their chosen form of fornication is being compared to other perversions. Culturally, morally, and spiritually speaking, we are reaping what we've sown (Gal. 6:7, 8). Where will this stop? It won't unless we repent of all our fornications and return to the standard for marriage and sexuality revealed by the Creator in His Word.

Does the Combine Do It's Job?

By Mason Venuso

Evangelism. Is it working? You proclaim the gospel to your relatives, to neighbors, to the poor, and to people on the street or at public venues. You pass out Bibles and tracts and utilize the internet, radio, and newspaper. There may be a bit of an adrenalin rush after a conversation or study with an unbeliever. Many in the congregation may be involved with various efforts. However, how many people are actually being saved? If your efforts at evangelism have produced few or no converts, then what are you so excited about? We may be enthused by our evangelistic ideas, our zeal, and the collective effort of the congregation, but let's not confuse efforts to share the gospel with actually bringing people to Christ.

We may be busy spreading the word and feel disappointed with the lack converts, or we may be pointing at the lack of converts resulting from the work of others as an excuse for our lack of involvement. "Is it working?" I say all this to get us to think. This is a question about function and purpose. Do we assume that success means converting people? Most people that I have spoken to about Christ have not been converted. Most people to whom the apostles, prophets, and Christ himself spoke were not converted. Success cannot be simplistically measured by how many are converted.

The gospel accomplishes what it is meant to accomplish every single time. "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:10-12).

What would the word of the Lord accomplish? It is true that it would ultimately renew Israel and give them peace (Isa. 55:12); but before this idyllic picture would become a reality, the majority of Israel would continue to reject the message that Isaiah proclaimed. Consider what the word of the Lord was accomplishing in Isaiah's day. "Go, and say to this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing,

but do not perceive' ” (Isa. 6:9). In this case, it was even meant by the Lord to harden its hearers.

In Luke 3, John told his audience that one mightier than he would immerse them in the Holy Spirit and fire. Isaiah, Joel, Zechariah, and Ezekiel all proclaimed the promise that the Lord would one day pour out his Spirit on his people (see Isa. 44:1-5). The prophets also speak about the Lord pouring out the fire of his wrath (see Ezk. 21:31). John described what the Lord was doing by saying, “His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire” (Lk. 3:17). In one act, the winnowing fork separated wheat from chaff.

Since most of us don't see people using winnowing forks on a regular basis, consider the many combines that have been harvesting this season. Before the combine shows up, you've got a field full of crops—plants that have grown because of a lot of sweat, water, and sunshine. The farmer is eagerly anticipating harvest time. But after the combine goes through, most of the stuff in the field is tossed aside! Only a relatively small portion of each plant is salvaged—the grain. How silly it would be to take a combine to the dump simply because it doesn't change the entire plant to grain. Its job is to separate the grain from the chaff.



The same goes for the message of God and the Spirit of God. The Lord's word accomplishes what he sends it to accomplish. For those who respond in faith, the immersion is of Spirit. For those who reject the Lord, the immersion is of fire. Though most reject the Spirit of God, it is not a failure. The Spirit is doing its job. To suggest that success is measured by how many people are converted would imply that God is weak.

The purpose and function of our proclaiming Christ is just that—to get the message out. The question “Is it working?” may still be asked. It can be a question of how well we are getting the word out or a question of *if* we are getting the word out. This is not to make us feel comfortable with work we are not doing. It is to point out that some of our greatest fears—our own inadequacy and being rejected by others—are no excuse for our failure to proclaim the Kingdom of God. The most surefire way to fail to bring people to Christ is to opt out of telling them about him. We must not excuse ourselves of the duty to proclaim Christ by pointing at our own inadequacies or the weaknesses of various methods of getting the word out.

On the whole, the message of Christ crucified has been and will be rejected. It is, after all, a declaration that we have all rejected the Lord. “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us” (2 Cor. 4:6-7).

Doctrinal Matters

By Doy Moyer

When we think of “doctrinal” issues, we tend to think of matters like marriage and divorce, the work of the church, baptism, etc. We work hard to try to get these right, and there are often sharp disagreements over the nature of these “doctrinal” matters.

“Doctrine” means teaching, and anything we teach is, definitionally, doctrinal. We often elevate the word “doctrinal” to some special status to mean the really important teachings, whereas “non-doctrinal” means those areas that we can disagree about. Then, we arbitrarily assign the various teachings in Scripture to one or the other status. Never mind that we can’t find this kind of use of “doctrinal” or “non-doctrinal” in Scripture.

Yet there is something else we may be missing. Do we realize that issues like loving neighbor as self, treating each other as we want to be treated, forgiving others, seeking peace, doing justice, and showing mercy are also doctrinal matters? In fact, so great are these teachings in Scripture that our own salvation depends on our actions relative to these issues. If I don’t love my neighbor, I am in violation of the most significant teaching that relates to how I think about other people. It is second only to loving God ([Matthew 22:36-40](#)). If I don’t treat others as I want to be treated, I am guilty of injustice, failing in the most basic task of seeing others as made in God’s image ([James 3:9](#)). If I don’t show mercy, I won’t be shown mercy ([James 2:13](#)). If I don’t forgive, I won’t be forgiven ([Mark 11:25](#)). If I am not seeking peace, I am not standing for Christ and His kingdom (cf. [Romans 14:17](#)).

Can it get any more important than that? We need to know that being wrong about these doctrinal matters most certainly puts our souls at eternal risk. We often stress the works of the flesh that will keep us from inheriting the kingdom of God ([Galatians 5:19-21](#)), yet failing to love, forgive, and show mercy will have the same effect. If we are not bearing the fruit of the Spirit (i.e., love, joy, peace, etc.), then the Spirit of God is not in us. We are lost.

I’m not saying that other doctrinal matters aren’t important—if Scripture teaches it, who are we to downplay it? Yet let’s not forget that love and mercy are at the heart of what it means to be servants of Christ and others. These are, indeed, the weightier matters, and the last thing we want is to find ourselves to be the hypocrites of [Matthew 23:23](#): *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!”*

Christians, we need to shine right now. The world is in desperate need of the light of Christ. Love one another. Love your neighbors. Treat others as you want to be treated. Be merciful. Be forgiving. Do justice. Seek peace. Pray hard. May God forbid that we neglect these doctrines through mistreating others.