



Northside Proclaimer

Proclaiming The Word Of The Lord

1 Thessalonians 1:8

Northside Church Of Christ Welcomes You!

Feb. 1, 2015

“Evil Surmising”

Bryan Garlock

Paul penned, “[i]f anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions...” (1 Tim. 6.3-4).

In this article we want to focus on the words “evil suspicions.” The KJV renders these words as, “evil surmisings” or “evil mistrust” (NCV). Dictionary.com defines “surmising” as, “to think or infer without certain or strong evidence; conjecture [something guessed]; guess.”

Paul places the word evil with “to think or infer without certain or strong evidence.” Thus, to evil surmise is “to think or infer without certain or strong evidence” in a wicked way. Obviously, it is bad judgment to surmise, but even more, it is sinful to evil surmise.

There are many times that brethren are guilty of evil surmising. We may notice or witness someone make a facial expression that displays anger or sadness. We may begin to ask ourselves many questions: “Why did they make this expression?” “Are they mad at me?” “Did I offend them?” “Was it something I said or did?” As you can see, it is easy to surmise.

Sometimes we think or imagine that others are involved in wrongdoing without real reason or evidence. This is evil surmising. We see or hear a brother or sister do or say something and automatically believe they are guilty of some wrong. For instance, I know of a preacher who hired a man to cut his lawn. The man not only mowed lawns, but also worked in a liquor store. One day the preacher went to the liquor store to pay for his lawn service. As he was leaving the store, another brother saw him and made it known to many that this preacher had gone to such a sinful place.

While it may have been bad judgment on the part of the preacher, the brother who witnessed such an event had no right to automatically assume the preacher was there to purchase alcohol. Thus, this brother evil surmised. In fact, anytime we ascribe bad motives to a brother or sister “without certain or strong evidence” we are evil surmising!

There are many consequences that come from such surmising. More often than not, we run to other brethren. Notice: “Did you see his or her facial expression?” “Did you hear the tone they said that in?” “Why did they say that?” Or, “I saw him come out of that liquor store.” This brethren, is gossip. Further, surmising could lead to bitterness in the relationship between brethren. These are just a few of the many sins, which come from evil suspicions.

Another consequence of evil surmising is a lack of love. Paul penned, “4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor. 13.4-7 NKJV). Continued on back...

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Private

Chronological Bible Reading Plan

Feb. 1 Ex. 7-9
Feb. 2 Ex. 10-12
Feb. 3 Ex. 13-15
Feb. 4 Ex. 16-18
Feb. 5 Ex. 19-21
Feb. 6 Ex. 22-24
Feb. 7 Ex. 25-27

All these things Paul mentioned are a culmination of love. Yet, we want to focus on verses five and seven. The apostle instructs two significant points that will do us well to learn in our endeavor to not evil surmise. First, Paul teaches love thinks no evil and second, that love believes all things.

To think no evil is to be long suffering in our thoughts that a brother or sister did us wrong. This causes us to “believe all things” good about our brethren until evidence is given to prove otherwise. On the other hand, the evil surmiser says, “I know what your real motive is!” and immediately believes the worst about them. When there is a lack of love, there is often bitterness and resentment.

Let’s now apply that to our illustration above. First, the preacher used poor judgment in paying for his lawn service at a liquor store. It would have been more beneficial for his influence and for the church’s for him to pay the man elsewhere. With that said, the brother who immediately began to evil surmise neglected to think no evil and to believe all things. He failed to believe the best about the preacher until proven otherwise. Thus, this brother failed to keep the most important commandment of all time, namely, love.

Sometimes we often do things we ought not, like make angry facial expressions or say things unloving to our brethren. However, there are times when some do not make angry facial expressions or say things un-lovingly, yet are perceived as though they are from others. Hence, it is contrary to the Scriptures to rush to judgment about a brother or sister’s actions. Our perception does not make them guilty. It is the truth that should determine guilt or innocence and we need to love enough to seek to find the truth.

We must observe here that two wrongs do not make a right. Just because we believe a brother or sister to be in error does not mean they are. Unless we can prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that they have sinned, we have no right to think evil about them. To remedy these offenses we sometimes feel from our brethren, Jesus taught, “[i]f your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother” (Matt. 18.15). What happens if we go to our brother and we find that he has done no wrong? We have thought no evil, believed all things, obeyed Jesus and eliminated evil suspicions, which often lead to gossip and bitterness!

Another point worth considering is the obligation of Christians to rebuke sin. It seems it has come to a point when one cannot preach the truth that convicts sinners because the truth speaker has ulterior motives. To the evil surmiser, the truth speaker isn’t rebuking sin because they love God, His Word, erring brethren and lost souls, he is rebuking sin to draw attention, condemn, judge and/or ridicule the guilty.

Finally, we must observe that evil surmising is nothing more than sinful judging. Jesus commanded, “[j]udge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (Matt. 7.24). When we surmise without “certain or strong evidence,” we form judgments that are unrighteous. That is sinful! Solomon taught, “[i]f one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame” (Prov. 18.13).

Evil suspicions have destroyed families, divided churches and caused hatred and bitterness between brethren. It all starts when we falsely believe wrong about our brethren. I have witnessed it and have been guilty of it. Let us strive to go by our courts’ motto when dealing with brethren, “innocent until proven guilty.” BG