**That’s Not Me… Is It?**

*by Jerry Fite*

We tend to think we would not do the bad things others have done. The Scribes and the Pharisees seemed to think they would not have been like their fathers, thus be *“partakers with them in the blood of the prophets” (Matthew 23:30).* Jesus seems to bring to our minds how we are like our fathers in our own generation by saying, *“Wherefore ye witness to yourselves, that ye are sons of them that slew the prophets” (Matthew 23:31).* Not wanting to receive the message of God’s true prophets will lead to shutting up the messenger in any generation. Jesus’ generation of Jewish leaders would reject, taunt and kill God’s ultimate prophet – Jesus the Christ *(Matthew 27:41-45, Acts 3:20-22).* Despite their objection, they were like their fathers.

I am no murderer… am I? Certainly not! Yet John writes, *“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him (I John 3:15).* Why does God equate the two? Hate originating in the heart often produces the deliberate taking of innocent life. Hatred can fuel anger and contempt which lie in the heart. Jesus exhorts all to change the character of the heart that leads to the action of murder. To remind His disciples of this importance He says, *“But I say unto you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca”, shall be in danger of the council and whosoever shall say, ‘Thou fool,’ shall be in danger of the hell of fire” (Matthew 5:22).* Angry hatred, leading the tongue to express terms of contempt, can cause one to come into God’s condemning judgment, even the punishment of eternal fire.

Enemies doing us evil can cause us to hate. Instead, we must love our enemies and do them good *(Matthew 5:44, Romans 12:20).* If we hate, we do not have eternal life abiding in us, just like a murderer. Do not let your enemies make a murderer out of you.

Some think they can steal from family and it is no big deal. But such action can be like being a destroyer of those who are the closest to you. *“Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, it is not transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer (Proverbs 28:24).* One might reason, “Dad and Mom have provided for me all my young life. Life has become a little complicated as an adult, so I will just take a little of their life’s savings. It is not robbing. It is just taking from my parents who have always provided for me.” In reality, you are a destroyer, taking from them that which they need to live on, thus bringing forth their possible financial destruction.

Some do not get too excited about work. Being lazy, they become slack in their work. God says, *“He that is slack in his work is brother to him that is a destroyer” (Proverbs 18:9).* Such action makes you a close companion to a destroyer because not working will make you a poor man *(Proverbs 10:4).*

We may think we would never do the evil that others do. But we can. Our self-justifications may be in reality that which all would reject as contemptible.

**God Demands Honesty**

*by Jerry Fite*

To be honest is to be “not given to lying, cheating, stealing…not characterized by falsehood or intent to mislead…” There is a Biblical mandate to be honest. God hates “*a lying tongue”,* and “*a false witness*” *(Proverbs 6:16-19).* No one dwells in God’s house who *“worketh deceit” (Psalm 101:7)*. A man has *“ceased to be wise and do good”* whose words are *“iniquity and deceit” (Psalm 36:3).* If we are to please God today, *“all wickedness and guile”* must be *“put away” (I Peter 2:1).*

Many today who believe they please God and are wise and do that which is good have no problem being deceptive when a greater good can be achieved. For example, President Obama made promises in securing the passing of “The Affordable Health Care Act” which we now realize were not true. To some, even if he lied, he did right for he achieved the greater good of getting a law passed that gives access to health care for many poor Americans.

Are honest statements not expected from our country’s leaders? Is deceit in one area of our speech commended if it facilitates your agenda for good? Instead of upholding God’s mandate for honesty, is “the end justifies the means” a greater virtue?

Paul does not agree. Even though the Jews disobedience brought about salvation for the Gentiles it does not mean that we *“should do evil”* so *“good may come” (Romans 3:8).* The Jew cannot escape God’s wrath for their evil because it brought about some good for the Gentile. God was not therefore unrighteous in visiting His wrath on the Jews, for the means (the Jews’ disobedience) is never justified, even if it meant salvation for the Gentiles in Christ.

Abraham learned that the end does not justify the means. The end he was looking at was his physical protection for himself among a foreign people *(Genesis 20:11).* Regarding Sarah, his wife, he said, *“She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took her” (Genesis 20:2)*. His “means” to the end of self-preservation was not a “boldface” lie, but was telling a “little half-truth.” Sarah was his “half-sister,” the daughter of his father, but not the daughter of his mother; but the complete truth is as Abraham finally confesses, *“she became my wife” (Genesis 20:12).*

The “end” which we see justifying our dishonesty is often shortsighted and limited. Abraham failed to regard the sin Abimelech would have committed by taking Sarah, the wife of Abraham, to his own bosom, but focused only upon his own personal safety. Often our end which we are willing to sacrifice honesty for, is not so totally “good.” Often the end is crafted in “selfishness,” instead of “godliness.”

Honesty is not only the best policy; it is demanded of us by our Lord. Following the Lord’s mandate will keep relationships strong and thriving. Once trust is lost because one has ceased to be honest, relationships deteriorate. Be wise and be honest and do that which is good.