

# Northeast Church of Christ

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## From the Pen of Paul: *Improper Attempts at Covering Sins (2)*

WE ARE CONTINUING TO LOOK AT false ways that men sometimes use in an attempt to cover their sins instead of having them “covered” in the proper sense as taught in Scripture.

Secrecy does not cover sin. Paul wrote of sins committed “in secret” in Ephesians 5:11-12: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame to speak of those things which are done in *secret*.” Just as sins cannot be covered by darkness, neither may they be covered by secrecy. “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). Just because no one is aware of our sins does not mean that they are covered. Nothing is secret from God. He even knows our thoughts! “Shall not God search this out? For He knoweth the secrets of the heart” (Psalm 44:21). So, how could we ever believe that sins can remain in secret?

There is a principle repeated several times in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount; that principle is “.....thy Father, which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Matt. 6:4, 6, 18). These statements are in regard to things *properly* done in secret (alms, prayer, fasting). However, would not the same principle hold true for sins committed in secret? Paul spoke of “the day when God shall judge the *secrets* of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:16). This was also recognized and taught by Solomon, who wrote, “For God shall bring every work into

judgment, with every *secret* thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecc. 12:14). No, you are not going to cover your sin by secrecy.

Blaming someone else will not cover our sin. From Eden on, men have been inclined to blame someone else for their own shortcomings. Adam blamed Eve and even God Himself. “The woman whom THOU gavest me....” (Gen. 3:12). Eve blamed the serpent (Gen. 3:13). Instead of making things right, they made excuses.

Today is no different. Some never accept responsibility for their own actions. Even in our courts today everyone is blamed with the crime committed except the perpetrator himself. We blame peer pressure, society, environment, parents, circumstances, etc. Many even blame God making the ridiculous claim that He made them sinful by making them an alcoholic or a sexual pervert! How blasphemous!!

Others may *contribute* to our sin by setting the wrong example, teaching us the wrong thing, enticing us to do evil, or by placing a stumblingblock in our path. However, we are still responsible for our own actions. Others will give account of their bad influence, but we will give account of permitting ourselves to be influenced. Paul warned about putting “a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way” (Rom. 14:13). But this statement was made following the statement that “every one of us shall give account of *himself* to God” (Rom. 14:12). And remember, Paul assures us that there is always a way to “escape” when we face temptations (I Cor.

***“Is it sinful to be divided in religion? Some say it is not while others say that it is. What does the Bible teach?”***

I am very happy for the last part of this question: “What does the Bible teach?” There are all sorts of doctrines and religious teachings flying everywhere. One teaches this and another teaches that. The irony lies within the fact that all of these religious bodies or organizations teach that they are following the Bible.

How does this come about? On what basis does this type of thing stand? It stands on the idea that the Bible may mean one thing to this group, but it may say an entirely different thing to another group. Many have and still are advocating that no one can understand the Bible. For people to advocate such teaching is but to reproach their Maker. If we say that we cannot understand the Bible, then we are saying that God cannot write so that man may understand His will.

The Bible teaches that we can know the truth. Christ said, “Ye shall know the truth” (John 8:32). Jesus also said if we wish to know the doctrine, we can know it (John 7:17). We can know the truth and we can rightly divide it (II Tim. 2:15). We can know the teachings of God because the Bible thoroughly furnishes us unto every good work (II Tim. 3:16-17). If we cannot learn the Father's will, the Bible, then we cannot come to Christ and be saved (John 6:45). What Bible verse teaches we cannot know the will of God? The teaching that says we cannot

know the truth originated in the mind of uninspired brains and not with God.

It is sinful to be divided religiously. The Bible teaches us to be one in Christ (Eph. 4:4-6). The Bible teaches us to speak the same thing (I Cor. 1:10). The Bible teaches us not to have division (I Cor. 1:10). Jesus prayed for unity of all believers (John 17:20-21). Religious division is confusing to those who are seeking salvation (John 17:20-21). God hates those who sow discord (Prov. 6:16-19). Those who divide the church are those who teach false doctrine. If we teach false doctrine, we have not God nor Christ (II John 9-11). Some add to and take from the Bible. This is sinful (Rev. 22:18-19).

If people would take the Bible and the Bible only, there would be Christians and Christians only. The Bible nowhere teaches division. Division comes from carnal man (I Cor. 3:3). Those who cause division are not to be in fellowship with God's people. (Rom. 16:17).

There were no denominations in the time of Christ and His apostles. Denominations came hundreds of years later. They came about due to a rebellion against the Roman Catholic church. They are man-founded and man-constructed. Every plant that God has not planted will be in deep trouble in the day of judgment (Matt. 15:14).

—*Malcolm L. Hill*

10:13). The same thing is taught by Paul in II Corinthians 5:10: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the thing done in *his* body, according to that *he hath done*, whether it be good or bad.” And when John was given a glimpse into the future and wrote of the judgment in Revelation 20:11-15, he mentions twice that “they were judged *every man according to their works*” (vv. 12-13). It is quite evident that we cannot cover our sins by blaming them on others.

A preacher telling you that you are right does not cover sin. This is sometimes done in regard to marriage, divorce and remarriage. The Bible's teaching on this subject is clear,

and some preacher's attempt to justify those in sin does not change the teaching at all. All of our teaching and all of our actions are to be done “in the name of the Lord” (Col. 3:17). This means, that what we say and do is to be authorized by Jesus. He only authorizes us to teach what the Holy Spirit has given us through inspired men (II Tim. 3:16-17). Just about every kind of doctrine is taught on this vital subject, but we must remember that we will be judged by our actions in light of God's word; preachers cannot cover sin by saying a thing is right when it is wrong.

*(Continued next week).*

—Paul M. Wilmoth