

February 13, 2005 (c)Homer Kizer

Commentary — From the Margins
Disqualified By Himself
Edwards on Edwards

Addressing a letter sent to *Servants News* concerning Garner Ted Armstrong, Norman and Marleen Edwards wrote [Edwards' emphasis], "As we have stated multiple times in our writing, the issue here **is not** repentant sinners, the issue is: '**Should people with known major sins be leader and preachers?**'...If a man is righteous for a while and qualifies to be an elder, does God 'save up' that righteousness and allow a certain amount of sin later on? 'But when a **righteous** man turns away from his **righteousness** and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* does, shall he live? All the **righteousness** which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the **sin** which he has committed, because of them he shall die' (Ezk 18:24). What does it take to disqualify a person as a leader?...If this leader has a slick lawyer or bribes a judge and manages to stay out of jail, would that make these sins acceptable in a leader. We think you can see that there is some limit to whom we can accept as a church leader" (Mar/Apr 1997 *Servants News*, page 34). The question now must be asked, what is a known major sin? And is a known major sin the only disqualifier of a leader?

Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). Any transgression of God's law, or of human law that is not in conflict with God's law is sin. And the wages of sin, of an attitude or mindset of lawlessness is death (Rom 6:23). If a born-from-above person proves to be unruleable when dwelling in a tabernacle of flesh, the person will not put on incorruptibility. Therefore, righteousness cannot be stored up for future use. The mindset of the person at death determines whether a person desires to be ruled by God, and is willing to submit in all things to God. And this mindset is revealed not just in the person's expressed attitude toward God, but in how the person submits to every authority placed over the person. This mindset is especially revealed in how a person treats his or her neighbor.

There are times of obvious spiritual testing. One of these times was during the top-down introduction of heresy in the Worldwide Church of God during the latter portion of the first Tkach administration. Both ministers and laity struggled with how to obey God when loyalty is an expectation of God. For some, the struggle wasn't all that difficult. These were the ministers and disciples who were "out of here" when the first rumor of change began to stink up the campus. Some left with a Flurry, but most stayed for change was needed. And in every case, God was observing just as He observed Abraham on his way up the mountain with Isaac, his son of promise.

Norman and Marlene Edwards mailed that infamous, anonymous letter to the entire ministry of the Worldwide Church of God, posting letters from different addresses on different days so that every letter arrived on the same day. Edwards then planned ahead of time what he could say without actually lying about whether he was the one who sent it out. He and Marleen believed that they had to reveal what was being planned, but that belief was an act of presumptuousness. And I used their posting of that anonymous letter as an example when Edwards asked when he had been deceitful. He acknowledged

that the letter and his contemplation of what to say were deceitful. But is this a major sin? It is, within the Sabbatarian community at Port Austin, a well-known sin. But Edwards claims that he has since grown. Thus, he writes that his *vagueness was intentional* concerning the receipt for the down payment monies he received from me. So indeed, he has grown and overcome his tendency to be deceitful in the same way that he objected to Garner Ted's overcoming his sexual misadventures.

Is a little deceitfulness all right? Is deceitfulness for a righteous cause acceptable? Or is all deceitfulness a stench in God's nostrils?

Can sins be compared, or is this foolishness? Adultery is of the flesh, and no flesh will enter heaven. Lust, however, is of the spirit. It is coveting that which is not lawful to the person to possess. Deceitfulness is also of the spirit, and is the defining attribute of Satan (Rev 12:9). And therein lies the greater problem: Garner Ted's sexual escapades, which no one could condone, were less vile than is a deceitful attitude. Lying about his adultery, or the moose he shot in Alaska did greater damage to the spiritual child of God dwelling within a tabernacle of flesh than did any affair. For from the same mindset that tells one lie comes expressed repentance, which could as easily be another lie.

God hates a lying tongue, for nothing from that mouth can be trusted. But it isn't just the great big whopper lies that God hates. The intent to deceive through vagueness comes from a lying spirit. The nature of timelessness requires that what is co-exists with what will be and what was; thus, Satan's rebellion came through subtlety. Satan became a lying spirit. For iniquity was found in this anointed cherub, but not until this cherub had subtly poisoned a third of the angels. Iniquity was revealed when this anointed cherub no longer agreed with God, but this iniquity began when this cherub made himself a judge of God, deciding for himself whether he could support God in his decision or in that decision. And his lies appeared as righteousness until his rebellion was discovered.

Satan's ministers appear as servants of righteousness (2 Cor 11:15). Their appearance doesn't reveal whom they serve, for evil is in a person's heart, in the person's spirit. But evil doesn't necessarily appear "evil." It can appear as an act of patriotism, such as surreptitiously mailing an anonymous letter to all WCG pastors, a letter exposing planned heresy. And here is where God spiritually tests. The person mailing the letter could have first tendered his resignation from the corporate church before bringing a case against the church. The person should have signed the letter. The person needed to act in an upright manner, even to the person's own harm. But this isn't what happened. Instead, the deceitful posting of the letter revealed whom Edwards truly served even if he didn't realize who his master was at the time. He then appeared as a servant of righteousness, and appeared as such a servant for a decade afterwards, but true righteousness spurns using deceitful, underhanded ways (2 Cor 4:2). True righteousness has no need for anonymous letters, or clever ploys of deniability. True righteousness would never write, "[This vagueness was intentional](#)," as Edwards wrote in his letter to me, dated January 25, 2005. The use of vagueness to conceal the truth comes from possessing a lying spirit.

Edwards filed a revised purchasing agreement on September 17, 2004, unbeknownst to the other three Port Austin trustees. He filed an undisclosed trustee indenture at the same time. And he concealed his actions from the other trustees until he was directly

asked for the trust indenture on October 29th. Then, when confronted by a determined Paul Drieman, Edwards admitted what he had deceitfully done six weeks earlier. And on October 31, 2004, the other three PASC trustes committed Norman and Marleen Edwards to Satan in hopes that through the destruction of the flesh the spirit might be saved.

Concerning Garner Ted Armstrong, Norman and Marleen Edwards continue their 1997 answer [Edwards' emphasis]: "We are not judging whether we are more or less righteous than Garner Ted Armstrong....We are sinners too. We continue in our service because our sins are **not creating major stumbling blocks** for other brethren and new converts" (SN 35).

When Edwards sins *create major stumbling blocks for other brethren and new converts*, then by Edwards own criteria, he disqualifies himself from being a leader or preacher or by extension, a trustee for the Sabbatarian Community at Port Austin. And Edwards' sins now create such stumbling blocks. He disqualifies himself.

The other trustees wondered why students who seemed committed to coming to SEE didn't show up in August. They believe they now know why: these students were able to discern Edwards' contrary spirit probably without fully realizing why they felt the negative vibes. The trustees were able to discern this contrary spirit once Edwards moved onto campus, and at first, they didn't want to believe what they were experiencing. They didn't want to believe that one of them was not genuine, but was a disguised minister of righteousness serving Satan himself. But by Edwards' deceitful actions, he has proved himself to be a servant of Satan.

The entirety of the WCG's corporate body, from laity to the pastor general, was spiritually tested a decade ago. The test was less over doctrine, which God can "fix" anytime, than it was over how would that collection of disciples handle being under corrupt authority. Would they rebel before God released them? Many did. Did they lust for what wasn't lawful? In some congregations, a rush of disciples hurried from services to pig out on lobster and shrimp as soon as Pasadena gave its approval. Ministers secretly organized, with many of the senior men planning to build for themselves spiritual houses. Disciples, as bewildered lambs, began telephoning one another. In a 24-page letter sent to his congregations, Wilbur Berg lobbied for a job. No one seemed to know how to handle what was happening. And throughout all of this, God was watching, evaluating, marking those who were genuine and those who were not. And one person then at headquarters who proved not to be genuine was Norman Scott Edwards. God has now separated him from the faithful through Edwards contemplating lawlessness, then acting upon the desire of his heart in filing a revised purchasing agreement. Thus, today Edwards' support comes from a hatful of rebels and a Texas blowheart, each of whom needs to reflect upon what it means to be presumptuous.

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