

Commentary — From the Margins *Tough Rhetoric*

When many of the disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit [that] gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.”

After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. (John 6:60–64, 66)

In America, Christianity is framed in the language of Evangelical Protestantism. When the word “sin” is uttered, a connection to lawlessness is not immediately made mentally. Rather, the hearer [auditor] begins thinking of associations such as Las Vegas, showgirls, the glamour of nightlife, neon lights, pornography, adultery, maybe even *Victoria's Secret*, then secretly approves of sin while outwardly condemning the harm caused to society by broken families, alcoholism, drug abuse, gambling, home invasions, and the general break down of societal respect for one another. Sin must be publicly condemned, but its lure fascinates inner secret lives that would like to be as exciting as novels, that lust for the forbidden, especially if sex and romance are entwined so that the heart feels alive, with Clint Eastwood's movie, *The Bridges of Madison County*, touching that inner self that wants more than it has. Sin is fatally attractive, a forbidden fruit that can be secretively savored in the mind whether it is actually ever eaten or not. It is acceptable as long as no one gets hurt. So from pulpits across America, preachers attack sin, making it a bogey man that must be imprisoned in the mind, held there, and never let loose, never set free to work its sinfulness in the lives of the saints whom Jesus has forgiven and liberated from the penalty of sin. Yes, sin without penalty lies at the heart of Evangelical Christendom although pastors must publicly beg forgiveness if caught indulging in forbidden liaisons.

Wow, it's a good thing that *what happens in Las Vegas stays in Las Vegas ...* what happens in Las Vegas happens wherever sin is condemned from pulpits, for it is the word—the linguistic icon—that is, itself, the problem. Sin as forbidden fruit must be eaten as Eve saw that the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was desirable and obtainable. Sin is, within America, both desirable and obtainable. It is the electrical spark that drives the heart of this nation and every other nation. The business of America is not business, but the repackaging of sin

into bite-size nuggets that can be exported to all of the world; for as gangsters learned long ago, there's money in selling sin to the outwardly righteous.

The mores of America trickle across bluegrass pastures and cascade down the slopes of majestic mountains, but then run underground in lost rivers that reemerge as the waters of the Snake River gurgle from Thousand Springs near Twin Falls, Idaho. The moral compass of America has lost its magnetism and now spins around nothing, orientating itself to what is most profitable this season.

Jesus said,

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness [*anomia*—ἀνομία¹]. (Matt 7:21–23)

When judgments are revealed (1 Co 4:5), according to Jesus, those who *have not done the will of the Father* will not enter the kingdom of heaven—this is a doctrine of "works," for doing takes works, with these works based upon faith. But more so than *doing the will of the Father*, all who are workers of lawlessness will be denied entrance into the kingdom of heaven regardless of the mighty works done in the name of Jesus. So doing good works in Christ's name are of no help to a disciple if the disciple is also a worker or teacher of lawlessness. *Doing the will of the Father*, now, places the disciple in agreement with keeping the law, or being law-abiding, and with being a worker who teaches observance of the law.

What law? Jesus also said in His Sermon on the Mount,

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 5:17–19)

Sin is nothing more than lawlessness. Jesus did not sin, for He fulfilled the Law, meaning simply that He kept the Law without violating it ever. He could do this because His Father was the *Logos, Theos*, and not the first Adam; so He was not born consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32) as every other human being has been. Likewise, disciples are born of Spirit, not begotten as was and still is erroneously taught by Herbert Armstrong and ministers trained by him. Disciples are real sons of God temporarily domiciled in tents of flesh, and their Father is God, not the first Adam. The tents of flesh retain the first Adam as their father, but disciples are not the tents in which they live for disciples are not male or female, Jew or Greek, free or bond, the retained attributes of the flesh (of the tent). Every disciple is a son of God, fully living as a son of God although presently confined within time as fallen angels are constrained in outer darkness.

¹ *Anomia* means, simply, "against the law," as in to transgress the law. Sin is, according to 1 John 3:4, *anomia*. Sin is lawlessness, or being against the law.

And every disciple is born of Spirit with sin having no dominion over the disciple (Rom 6:14).

But as long as Evangelical Christendom continues to define sin in terms of forbidden fruit, with this fruit individually wrapped in imagined romance and red silk or satin, then sin will, from within the person, hold the person prisoner to the desires of the flesh and the thoughts of the mind. The more loudly sin is denounced from pulpits, the more tightly it is held close to the person's heart. The unrequited sinner's flesh tingles in anticipation for what, if obtained, will prove to be unsatisfying and a loathing. But as long as sin is imprisoned in the heart, the hands behave themselves while the core of the person rots.

Does this mean that a person should enact the imaginations of the mind? No, not at all. What it means is that the word [linguistic icon] *sin* should be stricken from vocabularies, and *lawlessness*, an uglier but more precise word substituted for the collapse of moral values and social expectations that leads Christians to destruction rather than the kingdom of heaven.

Lawlessness, though, is what Evangelical Christendom doctrinally supports whenever it teaches that disciples are not under the law, but under Grace ... if disciples are not under the Law, then they are without law. They are lawless; they are *anomians*; they are sinners. Oh, yes, they are!

Clever, huh, that old dragon, Satan the devil—he has his ministers preach that disciples of Christ Jesus are not under the law, but under Grace, using the Apostle Paul's words against Christ. That is, indeed, what Paul wrote: disciples are not under the law, but under Grace, unless they present themselves as obedient servants to lawlessness (Rom 6:16). They are only under Grace if they are obedient to the Law, which leads to righteousness. They remove themselves from being under Grace the moment they willingly present their members as tools of unrighteousness to sin [*hamartia*—ἁμαρτία²] (v. 13).

Understand this well: the disciple who has been born of Spirit as a son of God misses the mark when the disciple does not keep the commandments as Jesus did. And because the disciple is born as a true spiritual infant, the disciple will learn the expectations of the household of God from either workers of lawlessness, the ministers of Satan (2 Co 11:15), or from those who work as Paul worked. Jesus will ask the Father to send the *parakletos*, the spirit of truth, to the disciple: from the testimony of the *parakletos* and from the testimony of the first disciples in the Gospels and Epistles, the disciple will learn of Christ Jesus. But when the disciple is falsely taught the rudiments of the faith by workers of lawlessness, the witness coming from the Gospels and Epistles becomes a contaminated testimony that is easy to believe by the disciple who holds the lure of sin imprisoned deep within the still fleshy heart of the person. Therefore, the *parakletos* becomes a witness against the lawless disciple that will not leave the disciple, but will testify when judgments are revealed. Disciples cannot escape the testimony of “the spirit of truth.”

Disciples cannot escape the law by substituting “sin” for lawlessness although Evangelical Christendom has had nearly a two centuries long reprieve from

² *Hamartia* is, simply, to miss the mark, to err, to commit a trespass. It is to come short of keeping the law so as not to share in entering the kingdom of heaven, the obtainable mark.

obedience that will leave many if not most of those who professed love for Jesus roasting in the lake of fire. Disciples shall not be crucified for their obedience to the law, but for their lawlessness. Disciples will not be denied by Christ for their obedience, but because they are workers of lawlessness. Disciples will not be called least in the kingdom of heaven for their obedience, but because they relaxed—they did not even break—the least of the commandments. Disciple will, however, be called great in the kingdom because of their obedience.

The *law* doesn't leave *lawlessness*, but is incorporated within the word. It was and is today Evangelicals who take *the law* out of sin and present to infant sons of God forbidden fruit, red and deliciously sinful. May they continue to eat the fruits of their labor until judgments are revealed; for they will not hear my words or the words of anyone else who preaches obedience by faith to the oracles of God. If these workers of lawlessness will not hear Jesus' words, the promise is that they will not hear my words.

So why continue to raise voices against these workers of lawlessness? Why not keep quiet and let God take care of them when judgments are revealed? Why continue to pump bullets into a dead horse? Why can't we all get along, letting each serve God as he or she sees fit? Yes, why not make nice with sin, excusing the inexcusable as another generation of the sons of God are spiritually slain, disemboweled, and hung as scalps on the lodge poles of demons? Why try to save a son of God that, today, lives perfectly satisfied at the gates of hell? Why pull a fiery brand from the flames of *Gehenna*, quench the flames, and give to this son of God clean clothes that do not smell of smoke? Why, because Christ pulled me from those flames. Can I do any less for someone else if I can?

The person who preaches lawlessness is without love, and is actually hateful, despising those who by faith practice obedience, not always getting it right, but willing to keep at the task until judgments are revealed. And the most hateful is the one who speaks the most about "love" and the goodness of God while teaching disciples to willfully sin by ignoring the law.

In this world, physical lives are taken with weapons forged of iron, but not so in the kingdom of heaven where spiritual lives are taken by disobedience ... the effeminate pastor with his pasted on smile is more dangerous spiritually than is Osama bin Laden dangerous physically: Osama bin Laden can be defeated in this world by obedience to the commandments of God, but as it is, America does look like a *great Satan* to those who would return the world to God; for it is America that exports *Sex in the City* and a host of other television programs that market human beings as if they were meat sold in the shambles of democracy, butchered fresh daily, packaged in greed and lust, and purchased by silly Christians in the secrecy of their homes.

Thank you cable television for helping make America exactly what our enemies accuse us of being—and thank you Evangelical Christendom for doing such a bad job of preaching Christ that a generation awaits spiritual birth when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh halfway through seven endtime years of tribulation.

Can't we all get along? No we can't; for Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt 10:34). Jesus' words, not mine.

I do not write to make friends with either this world, or with those who willfully practice lawlessness. Rather, I write to rebuke lawlessness. And most of the time, this will cause offense. Sobeit.

If you are a worker of lawlessness, why not cease? Why persist? What makes you think that obedience by faith to the law will cause you to fry in hell? Can't you see the logical fault in what you teach?

If you can't, then for the sake of others try to effectively describe what it is like to be under a delusion sent by God, a delusion that prevents repentance and stays salvation. Try to describe what others will experience in the great falling away when the lawless one is revealed (2 Thess 2:3). Maybe you can help me do my job.

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