

Morality and Religious Ethos: A Discussion between Paul and His Disciple

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ABSTRACT: In this article, we will discuss the aspects of morality that the Apostle Paul discusses with his disciple Timothy in his second epistle. Here we have analyzed the character traits that the contemporary Christian must pay attention to. In 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Paul has an important pastoral discussion about the future of the religious life and draws many signals about how people will be in the afterlife. We grouped these nineteen signals into 5 main categories, and they represent the analysis of the present study. Knowing the aspect that this epistle is a pastoral epistle and knowing that the principles of public life influence the religious ethos of the Christian, here we will present some features to which contemporary Christians must be careful.

KEYWORDS: morality, indiscipline, hedonism, violence, religious ethos

1. Introduction

Paul warns his disciple Timothy that in later times there will be "hard times." The greek word *calepoi*, used here to describe the times, is based on the meaning of "difficult, difficult" and may involve the phrases "hard to bear" or "violent, dangerous, threatening." To better understand the gravity of these times, I mention that in the Holy Scriptures we also find this term in the account of the two demonized in Gadara (Stott 2007, 99).

The New Testament meaning of this word shows us the nature of those times of the last days. Paul's second epistle to Timothy is a pastoral epistle and the issues presented here are the issues the Church will face in the days of the end, not the secular world. The church will face these problems because the people in the church will promote these characteristics in their lives.

In this study, we set out to analyze what the reason and action of religious people will look like in recent times. The word of God has certain negative characteristics that will be found in certain people who live their religious life and in the religious space, and these characteristic attitudes will affect the spiritual life of the Church of God. In this analysis we want to provide a public light for the Christian ethos and even a biblical teaching for the removal of such reasons and actions.

This study is the result of the desire for the Church of Christ to be kept clean and holy, as Christ desired it to remain. A pure and holy Church is the main factor for its development, and the testimony of those who are part of it is essential for its presentation as the body of Christ. If the public life of the spiritual man affects or promotes the image of the Church, it is necessary to look at the religious ethos under the lamp of spiritual vigilance and to place the analysis of the characteristics listed by Paul in the context of today's religious life.

In the biblical text of 2 Timothy 3:1-5; "*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous,*

boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3. Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4. Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”, we will analyze the moral reflections on the characteristics presented by Paul. We believe that by analyzing the broader meanings of these features and using them in other biblical passages, we will find a clearer understanding of what Paul wanted to convey to his disciple Timothy.

In this study, we have divided the nineteen Pauline characteristics of the religious ethos in recent times into five main categories of moral reflections. These five categories are: selfishness, indiscipline, violence, materialism, and hedonism. The sources used in our research will provide us with current explanations and practical applications for understanding this religious phenomenon.

2. Selfishness

Speaking of these characteristics, in a thematic way, which will multiply in the ecclesial framework, Paul enumerates, first of all, that people will be "lovers of themselves" and concludes with the characteristic "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. "(Stott 2007, 101). be, brass is contrasted with filo,qeois howing the self-direction, the selfish direction, of man in the days of the end. The ego or personal ego is of human nature, of human manufacture, and people want in this Christian altruism with the personal ego.

The expression "self-lovers" is explained by the philosopher Aristotle in terms of "immeasurable self-love" (Stott 2007, 103). It is the positive result of erroneous love far too much for oneself. Going further and analyzing other features listed by Pavel John Stott says that through the boastful expressions (avlazo,nej), William Barclay defines this word as the characteristic of a person who "offers human intelligence, instead of heavenly wisdom; who invents beautiful words, which never result in a remarkable deed; whose teaching pursues their prosperity and whose desire is profit and power" (Barclay 1982, 269), proud (u`perh,fanoi) and blasphemers (bla,sfhmoi) the author "develops the meaning of self-love" (Stott 2007, 101) and how it will manifest in the religious space.

These characteristic enumerations are and will be part of the life of some Christians who live, or will live, in the ecclesia christologica. These characteristics are part of an "unsocial, even antisocial behavior, ... (which) is the inevitable consequence of sinful egocentrism" (Stott 2007, 103).

3. Indiscipline

In the enumeration of the attributes that will characterize some Christians in the last days Paul shows a second fundamental problem of these times. I called this theme the subject of indiscipline.

Through the negative characteristics enumerated by Paul within the theme of indiscipline, the following particularities are found: disobedient to parents (goneu/sin avpeiqeij), unthankful (avca,ristoi), unholy (avno,sioi), without natural affection (a;storgoi), trucebreakers (avkrateij).

These negative qualities tell us about the indiscipline of recent times in three different contexts. Through the expressions "disobedient to parents" and "dissatisfied" the context of indiscipline moves within the family where children neglect their parents (Stott 2007, 103). Indiscipline starts from the family. Where children no longer listen to their parents and no longer direct their lives on the advice of their parents, indiscipline

is inevitable (Rotaru 2011, 5). Those children no longer obey their parents because something else has taken over their reason and they will guide their lives according to the ideas of others. This something else can be physical and / or mental. Of a physical nature when a negative entourage guides their lives, or other human ideas, and of a psychic nature, where the power of the demonic world speaks for itself.

The second context of the presence of indiscipline in the last days is extracted from the expressions "without piety" and "without natural love". These expressions direct us to the church where these characteristics will be found. The church will be attacked by indiscipline because people will be deprived of the godliness and love that every Christian must have.

The third undisciplined context in which some Christians will speak at the end time is the context or social framework. The expression "unbridled" shows that some Christians will no longer be able to control their natural beginnings in these times and if until then they represented the church in society positively, from that moment the negative example will characterize them.

This thematic feature presented by Paul finds more and more exponents of the church in our time. The young Christian refuses to listen to the advice of his parents and thus will lose his happiness and longevity in life. This loss and this indiscipline will move within the church and then by living in indiscipline these people will inevitably bring a stain to the Church of Christ in society.

4. Violence

A third thematic grouping of the characteristics listed by Paul is found under the name of violence. Even though in some biblical passages this word appears as an independent feature, I preferred its name because I found it to be the best synonym for the theme of these characteristic traits.

Through expressions trucebreakers (a;spndoi), incontinent (dia,boloi), fierce (avnh,meroi), despisers of those that are good (avfila,gaqoi), traitors (prodo,tai), heady (propetei/j), highminded (tetufwme,noi), Paul is, in a way, discuss about violence in the last days..

Speaking of violence, Dr. Chuck Pierce describes it as "the violation of God's perfect order" (Pierce 2008, 136). God left an order in this universe and this order was planted in man in order to "multiply and rule the earth." Man fulfills this goal but some people fulfill it in a negative way. Through the desire to master and elevate the self above all he departs from God, and by assimilating in his Christian character these qualities presented by Paul, he erodes his Christian character.

Jesus Christ in his eschatological discourse in Matthew chapters 24 and 25, to present the morality of the days after, uses the comparison with the days of Noah. Looking at Genesis 6:11 we find the universal characterization of the earth that was "full of violence," full of violence.

This human direction toward rebellion against ecclesial authority, as we speak of pastoral epistles, will cause God to pour out his wrath on those who do not repent of their violence. Looking at the moral climate that is described as existing in the time of Noah, we see how these are "examples of the coming of judgments upon the earth as prophesied in Revelation" (Heron 2004, 132).

5. Materialism

Materialism or interest in material possessions is a prominent subject in the teaching and life of Jesus Christ. According to the subject of the existence and manifestation of

the Kingdom of God, "Jesus speaks of money more frequently than any other subject" (Foster 1985, 19).

This subject of materialism is also debated in the Mosaic Decalogue by imposing a restriction on man to covet his neighbor's possessions. This commandment and teaching of Jesus Christ is so relevant to our times that the struggle to have more money is the main struggle of some Christians. This is because money brings power to influence, to accumulate possessions and to have new experiences.

The Holy Apostle Paul warns the Christian church of the presence of this sin in the apocalyptic church because there will be people who will be "lovers of money" (filarguroi). Friberg Lexicon in the sense given to this term refers to "the zeal for money, the desire to be rich, greedy, greedy" (Friberg Lexicon Bible Works, v. 8).

Another term used in the New Testament, synonymous with filarguroi, is pleonexia (Ephes. 4:19, 2 Corint. 9:5) and refers to greed. This word is defined by "Latin moralists as amor sceleratus habendi - the accursed love of possessing... it is the sin of man who values life in material terms (Luke 12:15)..., it is the sin of the world without God (Rom. 1:29) El, he is identified with idolatry (Col. 3: 5)..., he is related to sexual sin (Mark 7:22, Ephesians 4:19)" (Barclay 1982, 219-220).

Speaking on this subject, Derek Prince refers to the words of Jesus by which he compares the time of the end with the time of Noah and Lot. He says that the purpose of exemplifying the eight activities that existed in the time of Noah and Lot and that Jesus says we will find in the time of the end is to show that they were "immersed in these activities so that they were not in able to recognize the time in which they lived. Summarizing these activities in one word, this is materialism" (Prince 2008, 94).

Jesus Christ warns Christianity about this problem of materialism and says that "if we fall into this pit of materialism, we will not be ready to meet Him when He comes" (Prince 2008, 94).

6. Hedonism

After a long period of human history in which people were lovers of pleasures, it seems that today we must speak of "a culture of pleasures, a systematic development of taste and a continuous stimulation for pleasures" (Popovici 1993, 68). This is mainly due to the Sexual Revolution that began with the 1950s (Feinberg 1993, 150).

The Holy Apostle Paul warned the ministers through his epistles that they would face such problems in the church because in the end times people would move toward a character in which they would be "lovers of more pleasures" (filhodonoi) "more than lovers of God" (filoqeo).

This subordination is of human nature, a nature in which man renounces God and embarks on a path of pleasures led by these ta. e;rga th/j sarkoj. Christian morality does not reject the reality of pleasures, the reality of carnal love, but "subordinates it to the faith in God that must guide our lives" (Forell 1975, 133). The Christian is not led by ta. e;rga th/j sarkoj but is led by karpou tou pneumatou.

John Robinson in his book Proofs of a Conspiracy talks about the fact that one of the secret goals of the Illuminati is to promote pornographic literature and images through which to make young people grow in this subculture of immorality (Popovici 1993, 69). We can also observe this truth around us because "unrestricted nakedness and sexuality spread rapidly in the electric age" (Gheorghe 2008, 250). Through television, the Internet, newsstands, etc., humanity is littered with this sexual drug called pornography, in which some states invest more than a billion dollars annually.

Studies of sexual practices show that they "have not changed drastically in recent years. The basic idea is that the attitude has changed. What was done in secret in the

past is now done openly “(Finley 1982, 129). Since society and the Church lower moral standards, the irreparable effect of immorality is inevitable.

Today, another major Christian problem is the problem of homosexuality. This open nature of hedonism promoted in democracy through the freedom of personal law has led to the establishment of thousands of gay organizations. This problem has led to the greatest disappointment of our century, which is expressed by the fact that "some Christians not only excuse homosexuality but also affirm it as in accordance with Christian principles" (Lindsell 1974, 106). In other words, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah in vain because they were divinely allowed to practice sodomy. The great pain is that this conception is promoted not only by the laity but also by great Christian leaders who support this conception. How true is the Word of God, which says that “the time will come when men will not be able to endure sound doctrine; but they will tickle their ears to hear pleasant things, and they will give their teachers according to their desires” (2 Tim. 4:3)

7. Conclusion

As we saw in the analysis above, we must understand that the Church of God will be strongly attacked not only from the outside but from the inside. Changing character, from positive to negative, and spiritual direction, from holiness to sin, will be the great challenge of people who frequent the religious public space.

The great challenge of the Church of Christ remains that of maintaining an effective Christological witness in the secular public space. The Church will have to fight for the development of a holy character by each Christian and to fight against a compromised Christian ethos. In order for these things to be preserved, the preaching of the gospel and the moral teaching must remain biblical, centered on Christ.

The enumeration of the nineteen negative characteristics by which the Church of Christ will be tainted draws our attention to the seriousness with which every Christian must regard the development of Christian character and its preservation in an evangelical setting. The warning that Paul brings into question is not one that can be completely defeated, even destroyed, but through spiritual vigilance it will have to be confined, even removed, in the religious public space.

Paul's epistle to Timothy, being a pastoral epistle, finds its applicability in any religious space today. Even if, from a global point of view, things seem somewhat lost, there is still a hope that Paul brings into discussion through that of a local vigil, so that the religious ethos is preserved in the parameters set by Holy Scripture.

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