

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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When The Sentence Is Not Carried Out

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The writer of Ecclesiastes observes, “*Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil*” (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Works are *evil* because they contradict or violate God’s law which is *good* (Romans 7:12). The inspired writer notices when men see that their evil works are not soon punished, they feel more emboldened to do more evil. Where is the deterrent for not doing right? In their mind, doing right must not be important to the surrounding society because breaking the law does not receive swift punishment. Law without speedily enforced sentencing is like weight without gravity, pretty much meaningless.

If this is true regarding the lack of a “speedy sentence”, is it nor more so when penalties for disobeying law are “never” carried out?

In the last two decades we have seen a corrupting society tolerate more and more immorality on television and radio. While George Carlin made fun of the “forbidden words” in his comedy

routine a few years ago, one of those words has now been uttered on live television in a recent awards ceremony. Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake disgraced themselves recently in a live performance during the super bowl, by participating in a suggestive dance that conveyed both violent lust and actual nudity.

People in congress are trying to represent their constituents’ outrage over these public displays of indecency through congressional hearings. Laws have already been broken, will the sentencing ever take place? Also, will the fines levied ever actually be paid? At this present time, the network guilty for allowing the prohibited foul word to be aired has not paid a dime of their penalty. Attorneys are arguing over what is “excessive indecency”. Will the same network ever pay for airing Janet Jackson’s indecent exposure?

If the sentencing is not carried out speedily, or, through legal wrangling, the sentencing or payment of fines never occur, we know men will be more emboldened to display all forms of indecency over the air waves. Penalties on paper are not deterrents. Sen-

tencing carried out speedily has a beneficial affect in maintaining honor for law.

The truth of this principle in Ecclesiastes is seen in raising our children. When punishment for disobeying one’s parents is not carried out speedily, or never, the child will feel less restraint from further disobedience. Admonition or warnings are effective in raising children’s awareness of what is expected of them, but chastening, which involves carrying out the punishment phase of the child’s education is essential in bringing up a child in the way he or she should go (Ephesians 6:4, Proverbs 22:6, 23:13-14).

Local churches will suffer the lack of spiritual growth when this truth from Ecclesiastes is ignored. You can teach the truth of God from now on, but if withdrawing fellowship is not speedily or ever applied to those who persist in violating these demands, their heart will be set for more resistance to truth. Further corruption is surely ahead for the undisciplined individual, and the local church (cf. I Cor. 5:1-8).