

Housecleaning

'For we are reduced, O Lord, brought low everywhere in the world this day because of our sins.' (Dan. 3: 37)



For a couple years my pastor engaged in heterosexual immorality; we discovered this later, but in the meantime, everything changed. Our church became the soil for a strange kind of 'grace' teaching; out of his compromise, the pastor seeded a guilt-free, unclean Gospel among us. He extended his false liberty to us, a group of new converts barely free from our youthful addictions.

Another pastor I know recently changed his view on homosexual practice and now believes it is compatible with the Gospel. One of his staff had repented of her lesbian past and had resolved, at no small cost, to live a chaste life. Hearing her senior associate's new view opened doors for her. She has since met a vulnerable woman in the church with who she is now sexually involved.

Britain's most senior Roman Catholic leader, a cardinal, just acknowledged that he has been guilty of homosexual misconduct with several younger priests. (To his credit, he resigned and apologized for his actions.) No matter how conservative his theology, the ex-cardinal's actions has sown perversion into a nation.

His sin also casts a deepening shadow on the cardinals who now gather to select a new pope. Several of these are already suspect of covering-up priestly sexual abuse in their nations. The weary ask: 'Can anything good come out of Rome?'

Take heart. Jesus is not weary; He is intent on cleaning house. In the same way that He purged the temple of those who made the Father's prayer house a den of thieves, Jesus will expose and get rid of those shepherds who prey on the sheep.

That was precisely Jesus' point to the church at Thyatira. Jesus came to judge the church due to one Jezebel, a prophetic leader in the church who was leading congregants into that now familiar

blend of sexual immorality and spiritual idolatry. (Rev. 2: 18-29) Sensual worship of the creature is an idolatry all its own.

His eyes blazing like fire, Jesus takes aim at those elders who did nothing about this woman's ministry. Extraordinarily long-suffering with vulnerable sheep, Jesus is remarkably intolerant with tolerant shepherds. He claims that the elders have shirked their responsibility toward the most vulnerable. They let Jezebel do her thing, which involved seducing (v.20) and committing adultery (v.22) with the saints. Despite her claim to offer devotees 'the deep things of God' (1Cor 2:10), Jezebel is described by Jesus as trafficking in the 'deep things of Satan' (v.24).

Jesus is intolerant toward tolerating sexual immorality in His house. He insists on repentance, but claims that Jezebel will not repent. He thus visits judgment upon her and all that commit adultery with her. The unrepentant will suffer greatly, intensifying in the death of her offspring—morally, spiritually, physically. (v.22)

Jesus means business. His house will be a house of prayer, not of seduction. He wants us to love each other with clean hands and a pure heart. Those of us who know better need to help create a clean house for those just barely free from sexy idols. When we do this, we participate in 'overcoming' the deluge of false gods and goddesses tempting the people of God (v. 26). He promises that His very life, 'the morning star,' (v.28) will rise in our hearts and make a way for others, in truth the nations, to know Him more.

I close with this exhortation from Jude as to how we are to encourage the weaker ones to stand in purity. 'Be merciful to those who doubt.' (v.22) That means we reclaim those drawn to idolatry with kindness and gentleness. 'Snatch others from the fire and save them.' (v. 23) Decisive action is needed for those already under the power of sexual and spiritual seduction. Pray and love boldly. Jesus' alone springs the trap but we can do our part!

Lastly, Jude urges us to be careful in our love, so that we do not fall under the deception of the beloved. "Show mercy mixed with godly fear.' (v.23) That means we suffer long with profound mercy. We can do this while holding fast to God's design for the vulnerable one as culled from Scripture and Church tradition. We proceed in mercy, certain of its power over sin and the judgment it incurs.

'Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.' (1Cor. 4:2)