

**The Clarity Trumpet**  
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For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.  
I Corinthians 14:8-9

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## What Ever Happened to Christian Ethics?

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### The Problem

In this last decade of the twentieth century man continues to exalt himself to the level of a god. Evolution tells us that man is the ultimate, the highest in the chain of evolved creatures, and answerable to no one but himself.

Individualism, coupled with pragmatic relativism, has progressed so far in some circles that the very thought of being under anyone's authority but one's own is repugnant and rejected outright as having any real value in ordering one's personal life. Such individualism is the ideal haven for the con artists and the wheeler-dealers of this world.

Unfortunately this man-centered view of life has infiltrated Christian circles to where it is almost an assumed philosophy of church life, though no one would ever openly admit it. To our shame many of the men who live such self-centered lives have been respected *leaders* in our churches, schools, and other ministries. The results are devastating. For instance:

- The pastor who would go anywhere to speak and charge nothing for his services except for reimbursement for his plane fare. "How nice and sacrificial," was the usual response to such a generous offer. There was, however, one little unknown glitch. He would purchase his plane tickets using his *church's* credit card and then have the reimbursement payable to him *personally*.

- Or what about another pastor who had to leave his church under a cloud of immorality. He soon joined another church staff and was put over the church's summer youth camp. His previous church had a very successful camp ministry; so, what did this pastor do but call others informing them that his previous church was not going to have a camp that year -- when, in fact, they were. So, the churches that normally would have sent

their young people to his previous church's camp were now urged to send them to his camp which was scheduled *one week earlier* and *at the same location* where his previous church was having their camp!

- And then there are those Christian leaders who use "Christian counseling" as a means of getting a wedge into an unsuspecting person's life for personal advantage. For instance, a "man of the cloth" allowing a distraught woman to cry on his shoulder over a failing marriage, gaining her confidence, and then taking sexual advantage of her. And, unfortunately, the list goes on.

Jude, in describing apostates wrote, "*These are murmurers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage*" (Jude 16).

I am of the opinion that we are living in the days described in this passage. There is no sense in denying that these atrocities against the Lord are not happening; they are. We may somewhat understand why such things would occur in the lives of the unsaved religious person who is a stranger to the new birth and devoid of God's Spirit, but what of the genuine child of God? How is it possible that a man or woman who truly belongs to the Lord would be led into a life that would be an utter disgrace to their God.

### The Causes

Generally speaking, the cause of all failures among Christians is our sin nature and our willingness to yield to the flesh rather than the Spirit within us. But there are particular things that seem to contribute more directly to one's spiritual and moral downfall than just sin in general.

- **Negligence in attending to the things of the Lord in your personal life.** As a Christian leader -- and we are all leaders to someone -- you urge others to "get into the Word" and then you may allow days to go by without *prayerfully feeding* on His Word for yourself. Or, if you teach the Bible, your "study" of Scripture may be nothing more than sermon or class preparation *for others*, with little thought or application to your own heart and life.

You emphasize the importance of prayer but then only pray in an impersonal, perfunctory way. Prayer in your household may be nothing more than quick table blessings, if even that. Your children are the first to know that prayer, trusting God, doing what is right and honorable (even at personal loss), either is or is not all that important and meaningful to you. Normally, they will follow your lead, your example.

- **An undisciplined thought life.** Proverbs reminds us that "*as a man thinks in his heart so is he*" (23:7). Spiritual and moral battles are won or

lost in the mind. Before a word is spoken, before an act is committed, the battle has been won or lost. Speaking to believers, Paul wrote, “*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, [set their minds on] the things of the Spirit*” (Romans 8:5).

Jesus stated that “*out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man*” (Matthew 15:19, 20). You can’t spend hours watching TV during the week or viewing questionable videos and not be defiled, because what you see and hear will enter into and lodge in your mind and will influence the way you think, talk, and act -- if not immediately, at least eventually. You cannot read trashy novels or magazines and not suffer. You are only fooling yourself if you think otherwise. You cannot secretly desire another man’s wife, possessions, or position and not be degraded by it.

- **Thinking more highly of yourself than you ought.** Once you have been a believer for awhile and have some Christian service behind you, it is very easy to begin relying more and more upon your knowledge, your past effectiveness, your understanding of situations, your experiences. In Romans 12:3 Paul exhorts, “*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*”

In I Corinthians 10:12 the apostle wrote, “*Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*” This is followed in verse 13 by that tremendous promise concerning temptation, the gist of which (in the context of this article) is that you as a child of God need not fall into any temptation because *God is able* to keep you from falling and will provide the way of escape -- if you are open to taking that way.

- **Not taking the warnings of God seriously!** It has been my observation that it is almost universally true that there is little or no healthy fear of God in our midst. It is fairly easy to lead an audience into a worshipful frame of mind. Singing a few praise choruses usually does the trick. But far more seriously, do you honestly and sincerely believe you as a child of God will reap whatever you sow (Galatians 6:6,7)? Are you convinced that you will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of every deed done in the body, good and bad (II Cor. 10:5; Rom. 14:10-12)? Do you live your life under the conscious awareness that the Lord will *bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels* (motives) *of the hearts* -- including your heart (I Cor. 4:5), and

that *all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account* (Hebrews 4:13)?” We had better get serious about the things of God, acting quickly and decisively in response to His solemn warnings.

## The Cure

Let’s focus on what to do about the lack of high ethical standards among Christians. The bottom line is *unswerving, uncompromising obedience* to the Word of God and to the God of the Word. For instance,

- **The answer to negligence is diligence.** “*He who deals with a slack (negligent) hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes one rich*” (Proverbs 10:4). Think of this verse in a spiritual and moral context. You will be spiritually and morally rich if you are diligent. If you are naturally a loafer, a drifter who follows the flow, confess your sin and ask God to do whatever it takes to replace your indifferent casual attitude toward the holy things of God with a fervency that will not let up. Check out Proverbs 13:4 and 21:5.

- **The answer to an undisciplined thought life is disciplined thinking.** The great apostle told the Philippian believers, “*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true. . . noble. . . just. . . pure. . . lovely. . . of good report. . . meditate on these things*” (Philippians 4:8). You may not want to entertain the possibility that the solutions to your tendency to drift away from the Lord *requires effort*, but you cannot be truthful with Scripture without realizing that it is so.

- **Replace wrong thinking about yourself by recognizing your total indebtedness to God.** All that you are and all that you will ever accomplish is due to His enabling, His leading, His provision. “*For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you glory as if you had not received it?*” (I Corinthians 4:7).

- **Develop sober-mindedness.** Leaders of the Church *must* be sober-minded (I Timothy 3:2). Those “many” who were weak and sick, and who died because of their mistreatment of the Lord’s Table were frivolous concerning the things of God. The Lord’s solution was: “*let a man examine himself, and so let him eat. . . . For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.*” (I Corinthians 11:28-31). They were to replace their loose attitude concerning the things of God with sober reflection on their sin. When God’s warnings motivate you to change, and move you to action, you are well on your way to behaving ethically -- being *Christlike* in all you do. ∞