

HOW THE DEVIL USES HUMAN SENTIMENT

by Gary H. Patterson

www.greatgrace4u.com

grace4u@gmx.com

Sentiment: 1. a. A cast of mind; general mental disposition: (ex. Anti-American sentiment is running high in some countries.) b. An opinion about a specific matter; a view. 2. A thought, a view, or an attitude based on feeling or emotion instead of reason. 3. The emotional import of a passage. 4. a. susceptibility to tender, romantic, or nostalgic feeling. b. An expression of such susceptibility... 7. A vague feeling or awareness; sensation:

“From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. (22) Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” (23) But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (Mt. 16:21-23).

This incident serves as one of the greatest examples of how the devil will use human sentiment to hinder God’s purposes. Peter’s response to Jesus was based on an attitude, feeling, or emotion he had for Jesus instead of the understanding of God’s will which Jesus had already disclosed to His disciples on more than one occasion.

The scope of human sentiment is limited only to the realm of the human soul and cannot comprehend God’s mind (1 Cor. 2:14; Ro. 8:7). When the human soul is enlightened and inspired by the Holy Spirit, it can then aspire to something much greater than its own sentiments—the understanding of God’s thoughts and ways (1 Cor. 2:9-10). This is what happened to Peter prior to the previously mentioned event. Jesus asked His disciples (Mt. 16:15-18), “Who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, ““You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (17) Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. (18) And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.””

The “rock” upon which the Church must be built, in order to be victorious, is the revelation of who Christ is in the heart of each individual member. Every individual must partake of His divine nature directly (2 Pt. 1:1-4).

These two examples convey the importance of our never allowing human sentiment to interfere with God’s purposes. Anything we do for God’s Kingdom that maximizes human sentiment always opens the door for the devil.

On one occasion, Peter was moved by the revelation of the Holy Spirit to him of who Christ is. On the other, he was moved by what he felt about or how he felt toward Christ. The two events form the dividing line between genuine God-inspired devotion to Christ and powerless and “well-intentioned” piety. Such piety may in appearance seem benign (harmless) but there will always be a “serpent” lurking underneath.

Human sentiment is probably the greatest hindrance to the development and growth of faith in Christ. This is why Jesus declared: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (Lk. 14:26-27). Hatred in this case is referring to our denying ourselves the familial bonds that would keep us from fulfilling the will of God in our lives.

At the announcement of Jesus’ coming birth, Mary was told that a “sword” would pierce her soul (Lk. 2:35). Jesus also stated during His public ministry that He came not to bring [outward, worldly] peace but a sword that divides and causes enmity even among family members (Mt. 10:34). He was indicating that those who embrace the truth (of taking up your cross and wholeheartedly following after Christ) can no longer relate to anyone in the same manner as before. This sword began to pierce Mary’s heart when Jesus started referring to her as “woman” instead of mother (Jn. 2:4; 19:26). Jesus was not being disrespectful toward her. He had to minimize that relationship to maximize His status and relationship with His Father in Heaven. Mary’s status before God could not be based on the fact that she was His mother but only in the truth that He is the Messiah and her faith in Him. She too had to be redeemed from sin because *all* have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Ro. 3:23).

If you are a Christian parent, using the necessary means in raising your children in a godly manner is a bygone conclusion. One thing that became quite clear during the process of raising our daughter is that my perception of providing for, protecting, nurturing, comforting, training, and defending her was at times contradictory to God’s ways. There would be times when I wanted to rise to her defense because of some “injustice” and God would urge me not to. His wisdom still echoes in my heart as to why: “So that her faith would be placed in God and not in me.” Yes, we still coached her through things but she had to develop her own faith in God. Because of my parental love, the time, teaching, and training invested, the pleasant memories, and the mutual fondness developed over many years, I (humanly speaking) would favor her over someone else’s child even if doing so would be an injustice against the other child.

Human sentiment breeds partiality. Partiality is a great injustice according to Scripture (See Jas. 2:1-13).

Throughout history, certain human rights movements may have been inspired by God originally but lost their way because of holding on to the common offense that necessitated the movement. Prejudice shown by a society and its government to a gender or an ethnic minority becomes the source of offense. Prejudice, left unchecked, can turn into indifference, indifference into blatant hatred, hatred into civil and criminal injustices and violence. The sentiments that are rooted in offense and that also bind people together for a common cause end up producing the same fruit as the original offense. Those people become partial to their own and, thereby, reproduce the bias, bigotry, discrimination, and hatred among themselves.

Universalism is becoming a popular religion because influential television celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey have embraced and preach it. Its message is "tolerance." This includes tolerating things that God rejects or condemns. According to this message, those who (although in agreement with God) call homosexuality an abomination or Islam a false and idolatrous religion are intolerant or "haters." Universalism in its more blatant form accepts all religions as the pathway to God and teaches that all creatures and people will ultimately be reconciled to Him. It denies the foundational doctrine of God's eternal judgment and advocates reincarnation and "karma" (Heb. 6).

Ms. Winfrey, who was taught about Jesus in her early years, has denied Him as the Son of God, the One through whom alone comes salvation and eternal life. Like the woman with the spirit of divination (Acts 16:16-18), she talks about God and salvation, but who is she really glorifying? When she talks about "Jesus," it is not the same Jesus that God raised from the dead and who He also seated at His right hand. The "Jesus" she talks about is a counterfeit and is no greater than Mohammed or Gautama Buddha. They are both dead.

Variations of Universalism are sneaking into the Church through religious unity movements and misunderstandings concerning God's system of justice. Some of the inroads are teachings that claim that a loving God would send no one to hell (a place of confinement for criminals). This doctrine comes from an overemphasis of and confusion concerning the goodness of God and a failure to also understand His severity and justice (Rom. 11:22).

If we allow human sentiment to influence how we feel about the foundational doctrine of eternal judgment (Heb. 6), God's justice will be equated with cruelty. While God's justice may in appearance seem cruel, cruelty is never just. Cruelty involves not only unkindness but also brutality and malice. God is morally just but never mean or malicious. He is not willing that anyone should perish (eternally) but must protect His Kingdom and people against those who would do it harm. A good shepherd may have to kill a wolf or bear that is threatening his sheep. This doesn't indicate that he is cruel, brutal, unkind, or mean. No, it reveals that he truly is a good shepherd. We must never allow our human sentiment to define God's justice as cruel. Nor can we ever attempt to

customize or adapt His justice to appease how we feel about something or to cater to our lack of death to idolatrous familial bonds.

The foundation upon which God's throne (His rule) rests is judgment and justice (Ps. 89:14-18; Isa. 9:6-7). This indicates that the existence and integrity of all creation depends on His justice being served.

How we feel about hell, the lake of fire (places of eternal incarceration), and the possibility of loved ones suffering in those places cannot ever influence our interpretation of the Biblical truth about those things. In the last days, those who refuse the love of the Truth will be turned over to strong delusion (2 Ths. 2).

Is God's system of justice discriminating, allowing only certain people to be saved (redeemed, justified, born-again)? What about those who have not heard the Gospel? Will they end up in hell or, eventually, the lake of fire? First, we must understand that all people are already condemned (sentenced) to eternal separation (incarceration) away from God's presence because all have sinned—are found guilty by God's moral law (Rom. 3). The Gospel message is God's final and most evident attempt to send them a "lifeboat." He does not have to send it if you have refused all of His other attempts to prepare your heart for the Gospel through the laws of creation, all of the evidences of His intelligent design, conscience, moral law, and difficulties that challenge the limitations of our humanity. God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, uses all of these things to bring us to the place in our hearts in which we can fully embrace His Son as our Redeemer. The Gospel message is His commitment to go the "second mile" although we have treated Him like refuse and rejected all of His previous "messengers." God is loooooongsuffering and is not willing that anyone should perish but that all would receive eternal life (2 Pt. 3:9).

God's written moral law was given to prove the guilt of every person that has ever lived or will live (Ro. 3:9-19). Those ethnic groups to whom the law was not given are a law unto themselves by virtue of their conscience. A person's conscience echoes God's moral law.

God did not owe us Jesus' sacrifice for our sins (our crimes against God government). That act was based solely on His willingness to show mercy. His mercy is better defined in the proper context. Imagine showing mercy on the person who just murdered your child. Not only that, you willingly take that person's punishment upon yourself. This is similar to the mercy God has shown us all. All of our sins, from Adam to the last person to be born on earth, nailed Jesus to the cross. In a sense, we all murdered Him.

Let us fully embrace this truth: all of the goodness of every human being combined cannot attain to the righteousness that God requires in order for our sins to be put away before Him. Jesus had to die to put away our sins and, in so doing, our just punishment also. Faith in His sacrifice and resurrection is our acceptable and perfect righteousness before God. Our faith must be in what He did and not in what we do.

Mercy is available to all people but not all find it. Why? Because not all have allowed themselves to be convinced that they need it. Instead, they scoff at and defy their Redeemer. They spit in the face of such a great and excellent love. God has set everything in place to convince every single person of their need for His mercy. Instead, they are ungrateful and shake their fist in His face (see Psalm 2). Because of despising His rule (His throne; justice and judgment), the mercy, grace, and truth that shines from His face is hidden from them (Ps. 89:14-18). God will not waste His “pearls” on the swine (Mt. 7:6).

In Acts 16:6-7, why did the Holy Spirit tell Paul and Timothy not to preach the Gospel in Asia and in certain Asia Minor provinces? Instead, the Gospel went west—to Rome, Spain, Europe, England, and then to the Americas and the nations of Africa. The east is comprised of nations that have continually shown hostility to the nation of Israel. These nations include the descendants of Ismael, Esau, Lot (Abraham’s nephew), and those nations that make up, at least in part, what is defined as “Babylon.” These nations have embraced antichrist religious and political beliefs and systems that greatly hinder them, to this day, from being prepared for the Gospel.

Jesus made it clear that no one can come to the Father except through Him (Jn. 14:6). He also took it a step further and said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. (45) It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me” (Jn. 6:44-45). If the necessary preparation of the heart of people within a society is greatly hindered, then the Gospel will be “wasted on the swine.” The messengers’ blood will also be wasted—they would become needless casualties of war.

According to Romans 1:20, since God is invisible, He has clearly revealed Himself to every person that has ever lived. Every person has received the understanding of who He is since the beginning of creation and are without excuse. The only exceptions within God’s justice system are babies and children who have not reached “the age of accountability” (the full development of conscience). Another exception could be those people who are mentally incapacitated to the point they have little-to-no self-consciousness.

No one will be able to blame God for the eternal judgment and punishment to which they are sentenced. Remember, God destroyed every human being on the face of the earth except for Noah and his family. Is that discrimination on God’s part? No, it only proves how wicked mankind had become because of sin’s death-march and how God’s justice must prevail in all things. God is so good that He preserved one family and, as the result, we are here today. Thank God for His incredible mercy. Besides, according to Scripture, Noah’s continual testimony of God to that generation and the building of the ark took place over one hundred years (See Gen. 1-4). They were without excuse and scoffed at Noah instead. How many are scoffing today? He who sits in the heavens laughs. The stone (Jesus) that the builders of society have rejected has become the

Chief Cornerstone of all creation. It was to Him, that God promised: “Ask Me, and I will give You the nations as Your inheritance” (Ps. 2; Ps 118:22; Mt. 21:42; 1 Pt. 2:7).

How can a loving God send someone to hell or the lake of fire? Yes, contrary to beliefs that are presently gaining popularity, God does sentence people to eternal punishment because they leave Him with no other choice. God has appointed “jailers” who will forcefully take them away. How can a criminal court judge sentence someone to incarceration or to death row? Does this indicate that the judge is void of love or is it that he understands the overall integrity of a society depends on the execution of justice? For judges to succumb to personal sentiment in their judgments would result in the exponential propagation of injustice (crime) within a society. Yes, the Bible states that God is love, but it also states that He is a consuming fire and the Righteous Judge (Heb. 12:28-29; 2 Tim. 4:8).

God will never incorporate human sentiment in His judgments and system of justice unless the concerned person or people seek first His Kingdom and righteousness. (The governments of mankind should never do it either.) Their sentiments must first allow Him his rightful place. Every knee will bow to the Son of God as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (See Rev. 4) and not to human sentiment.

Most, if not all, deceptive doctrines find inroads into our thinking on the human sentiment level. I once heard a television minister state that the Apostle Paul missed it because he didn't have to go through all those trials and troubles. He stated that he believed this because his “spiritual father” taught it. To begin with, the arrogance here is obvious. Secondly, this minister's fondness of a “spiritual father” should never be in competition with a solid and uncompromising love for the truth. He believed it because of his feelings for and loyalty to another human being. By so doing, he has betrayed Christ. You cannot serve two masters (Lk. 16:13). This gives us more insight as to why Jesus told us not to call anyone “father” except our Father in Heaven (Mt. 23:1-12). The title “father” allows certain entitlements to the bearers of that title. Those entitlements are defined by the expectations a particular society or religious group places on it. When loyalty to a “father” infringes on our supreme loyalty to Christ, we become idolaters.

The spiritual battle of this age can be defined in terms of God-inspired truth verses the counterfeits. One truth stands out above the rest as the judge and jury of all the other claims of truth in the world. As already established in an earlier chapter, the Spirit of truth only brings honor to Christ—draws attention to who He is and His finished work of redemption. God-inspired truth does not sing the praises of human accomplishment, intelligence, sentiment, religious devotion, or goodness. Only the wayward, insecure, and “unyoked” (not having Christ's yoke) souls of men seek the limelight.

God has made it quite clear: what we believe to be true will determine our eternal destiny.

Jesus testified before Pilate: “For this cause I was born and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth

hears My voice” (Jn. 18:37). The present increase of God’s Kingdom in the earth largely depends on the prevalence of His truth in the hearts and minds of people. As was recorded in Acts 19, the word of God must grow mightily and prevail. The success of God’s word depends largely on the purity and overall reliability of the messenger. The messenger must be one heart and mind with the Author, Christ. His anointing must be their anointing in character and in ability.

Jesus concluded His rebuke to Peter by directing this exhortation toward all His disciples:

(24) “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. (25) For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (26) For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (27) For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”

A lack of death to the self-life within believers (See Mk. 8:34-38) has allowed, through human sentiment, distorted perceptions of and doctrines about God and civil government to arise in this hour. Those who embrace sound Biblical doctrine are true to the person of Christ above all else, even above their family, associates, and political affiliations.

To deny ourselves indicates that we have forgotten or lost sight of ourselves and our own interests and have embraced God’s interests. Jesus pressed His disciples to give up complete ownership of their souls to Him, becoming a servant of His intents and purposes. He warned them that their eternal destiny would depend on their doing so—that they could lose their own soul by loving the things of the world. Jesus warned us all that our final reward will be determined by what we do with our soul and the quality of the works that follow.

So, which shall we allow to rule us:

Our souls and its sentiments or...

Christ’s (ruling) yoke that is easy, light, and ministers rest to our souls?

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