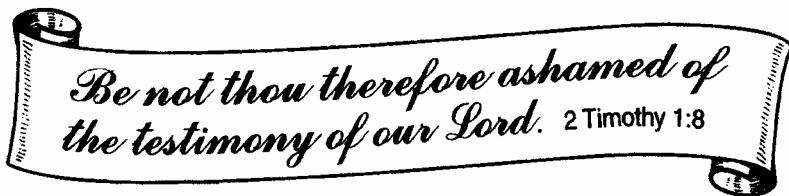


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Editorial.

Above the Trembling Elements.

The recent roiling of the financial markets is unparalleled in our generation. Financial collapses, forced buyouts, and sudden reorganizations of financial institutions after financial institutions have raised fear in the hearts of many. Reports of faltering behemoth banks urgently seeking buyers sent shudders throughout the financial world. The financial collapse that preceded the Great Depression is distant history to most of us, but the current financial upheaval reminds us that economic collapse can be more than fading history.

The financial markets may again become steadier and the recent financial uncertainty may then be considered an overreaction. Nevertheless, this instability is a reminder to us to evaluate our view of finances and our material possessions. What should our response be to the recent financial tumult?

We should recognize that the "securities" of man are always insecure. Even the most solid and trustworthy monetary system that man can devise is temporal. An economy based on a monetary system that relies on sheer confidence to determine its validity is inherently unsteady and especially so when that confidence falters. As with the pride of Ephraim, these securities can be swept away as if by "a flood

of mighty waters overflowing" and are "a fading flower" (Isaiah 28:1-4).

We may not place undue confidence in the securities of man even during times of economic prosperity. Banks and even national economies are subject to failure. Real estate, considered to be the most nearly secure asset, is also temporal and insecure. We should recognize that we can lose all our possessions in a very short time. And someday all that we now possess will pass away (2 Peter 3:10-13).

We should continue to practice sound economics based on Biblical principles. The cause of the current economic crisis is not a mystery; market adjustments were to be expected. Individuals, corporations, banks, and even governments have been borrowing and lending with little caution. Many people have been borrowing beyond their means so they could spend lavishly, and financial institutions have been willing to finance them with high-risk loans. This loan-driven spending has pushed many prices to unrealistic highs. The resultant financial bubble could not continue indefinitely without deflating, and that deflation is sometimes quite sudden and financially damaging.

Even in good economic times, we

must remain cautious in our borrowing and lending. We must see debt as a serious commitment and remember that "the borrower is servant to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7). Our debt load should not be an undue burden to us. We should not borrow money unless we have carefully calculated how we plan to repay it.

We should avoid the speculative and not become unequally yoked in our investments. Applying these principles has somewhat shielded us from the initial lurches in the stock market. However, we may well suffer from the collateral damage the financial markets inflict on the overall economy, and even this resulting damage can be quite severe.

We should maintain our trust in the Lord. God is our rock, our fortress, our deliverer, our shield, and the horn of our salvation (2 Samuel 22:2-3). The unsettled economy should concern us, but it should not disturb our peace with God. It is not our security; neither is it our purpose in life. As we use our financial resources so that they complement spiritual growth and become eternal investments (Luke 16:1-12), we will be able to view the weak economy from the proper perspective.

When society panics, our trust in the Lord should enable us to have a restfulness that contrasts with the

financial unrest in society. Our neighbors should sense that our trust is in the Lord rather than in a financial package, a government rescue plan, international coordination, or even a strong economy. They should recognize that we are neither overly optimistic during times of economic exuberance nor distraught during financial disturbances.

Even if we do lose our possessions, like Habakkuk, we should confess, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

We should lift up our heads for eternal deliverance. The prophetic Word indicates scarcity and inflation in the end times (Revelation 6:5-8). Although we do not make conclusive links between these current events and prophecy, the parallels should alert us. Indeed, whether in the midst of economic sunshine or shadow, we should be anticipating the Lord's return. Whether society is experiencing financial doldrums or exuberance, we should ever "lift up [our] heads; for [our] redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). —GEA

The Threat of Relativism (Part 1) **The Reasonings of Relativism**

The fool's philosophy, godless atheism, declares, "There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). The cold, immoral atheism, in its clamor for broader acceptance, spawned secular humanism. Man, apart from God, now sought to elevate mankind through reasoning.

Relativism is a branch of humanistic thinking and therefore begins with man's reasoning rather than with God's. Relativism rests on the supposed wisdom of men rather than the true wisdom of God.

What are the core teachings of this vanity of relativism, and what are the results?

Relativism is the philosophy that right and wrong depend on the individuals and groups holding them. Relativists believe that man is naturally good.

Humanistic psychology and existentialism are based on relativism. Both movements grew out of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche's proclamation that "God is dead." Both emphasize alienation from values based on the authority of revealed truth, and both promote a need for the individual to derive meaning through his personal search for identity and authenticity.

Nietzsche rejected the Scriptures. He hated religion and Christianity

in particular. Millions of people chose to believe his assertion that God is dead.

When Einstein propounded his theory of relativity, which had nothing to do with ethics, the humanistic camps rode on a wave of misplaced scientific authenticity.

Paul Johnson, an eminent historian writes; "Mistakenly, but perhaps inevitably, relativity becomes confused with relativism. No one was more distressed than Einstein by this public misapprehension. He was bewildered by the relentless publicity and error which his work seemed to promote.... Einstein was not a practicing Jew, but he acknowledged God. He believed passionately in absolute standards of right and wrong.... He lived to see moral relativism, to him a disease, become a social pandemic.... The public response to relativity was one of the principal formative influences on the course of twentieth century history. [Relativity] formed a knife, inadvertently wielded by its author, to help cut society adrift from its traditional moorings in the faith and morals of Judeo-Christian culture.

Abraham Maslow, sometimes considered the father of humanistic psychology, emphasized his theory that "being-values" were inborn in every person and found their fullest expression through "self-

actualization," that is, by finding the truth in one's self. He taught that in doing so, man could be "fully human" and would be closest to embodying absolute good. Violent behavior, thievery, and immorality would presumably disappear once their root causes, called "unmet deficiency needs," were satisfied. To Maslow, social controls merely created unnecessary conflicts and stifled human activity. Maslow's teachings obviously contributed to the moral breakdown of society.

Maslow's student, Ruth Benedict, said;

In the past, we Westerners have been unable to appreciate the virtues of other cultures because we were blinded by our belief in the "Divine Truth" of our Judeo-Christian tradition. Now, however, we have thrown off that particular absurdity and need only to set aside our Anglo-Saxon intolerance" and racist prejudices in order to study other cultures objectively and learn from them.

Benedict considered it her mission to make the world safe for difference. The ungodliness of her philosophy was demonstrated in her morally perverted life.

These leaders in relativism usually considered child training and establishing norms of behavior to be hindrances to attaining this "fully human" goal. Contrast these

human reasonings with God's truth: "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Psalm 58:3).

Maslow held that "in repressing unacceptable desires, man protects himself from the hell within himself, [but] he also cuts himself off from the heaven within." "Peak experiences dissolve our anxieties and defenses and make us whole again. The civil war within is neither won nor lost but transcended." Thus Maslow identified with the struggle described in Romans 7, but rejected God's answer in Romans 8—or even the need for any answer.

His writings emphasized the value of "creative rebellion." He taught that one should challenge authority, should pick and choose personal values of right and wrong, should do what felt good inside, and should create a new identity that was uniquely his own. The results of this philosophy and the quest for these "peak experiences" contributed to the drug abuse and hard-rock music of the last half century.

Other relativists echoed Maslow's teachings. Dr. Hal Lyon claimed to have discovered "a religion of the self ... really of a worship of the inner self." William Coulsen taught, "When people do what they deeply want to do, it isn't immoral."

Hunter College psychologist

Donald H. Clark came to the conclusion that there was nothing wrong even with moral perversion. The problem, as he identified it, was a socially instilled prejudice that functioned exactly like racial prejudice.

Significantly, William Coulsen himself eventually and objectively concluded that humanistic psychology was not solving anything. In fact, he decided that it was creating new problems that had not existed before. He eventually concluded, "The therapy was the disease." However, he failed to identify it as sin.

From a Biblical perspective, the result of relativism is far more pernicious than Coulsen came to realize. Society's drift into relativism contributed to today's hedonism,

which teaches that living for happiness and pleasure is the highest good. This departure from God and truth is parallel to Paul's description: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Romans 1:28).

"Thy teachers have transgressed against me" (Isaiah 43:27). May we make no room in our hearts and lives for the perversions of relativism. Rather, our attitude must be, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

Brother Edward., PA. Reference source: *Malpsychia*, by Joyce Milton.



The Snare of Evil Surmising

The apostle Paul warned about men whose teaching was contrary to sound doctrine. He described these men as proud—knowing nothing and loving disputation. One result of these proud, disputatious attitudes was evil surmisings (1 Timothy 6:4).

What are evil surmisings?

Evil surmisings are the forming

of suspicions and uncharitable conclusions based on supposition and incomplete evidence. They have been defined as "hurtful suspicions." King Saul is an example of this when he falsely accused the Benjamites and Abimelech the priest of conspiring against him in helping David (1 Samuel 22).

Sometimes we surmise evil by drawing negative conclusions from

a single observation or experience. For example, we may observe a cluttered house and, on the basis of one observation, conclude that the wife is a poor housekeeper. We can also be guilty of this evil by allowing ourselves to imagine what others are thinking about us. Based on a comment, action, or even a glance, we can begin to surmise and build a case on imaginations.

Evil surmisings include evaluating and judging what we suppose to be the motive behind the words and actions of another. When the king of Syria sent Naaman to King Jehoram to be healed of his leprosy, Jehoram incorrectly surmised that the real motive for this visit was to seek a quarrel (2 Kings 5:7).

What are the causes of evil surmisings?

Pride is often the root of the matter (1 Timothy 6:4). A feeling of superiority often results in the surmising of negative things about others. Inferiority can also cause a person to surmise that others may have condescending and disapproving thoughts about him.

Covetousness is a fertile seedbed for evil surmisings. "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). This love of money can cause us to question another's honesty in his business dealings or to imagine that others are out to take advantage of us. We could, for example, surmise that a well-to-do

individual must be using unscriptural means to gain his wealth.

Evil surmisings thrive when there is a love of controversy and dispute. "Doting about questions and strifes of words" (1 Timothy 6:4) means having a morbid love for disputes and profitless discussions. Such controversies usually lead to active imaginations and hurtful suspicions about the integrity of the one who disagrees with us.

A lack of carefulness in the defense of Biblical principle and position can also lead to evil surmisings. For example, the two and one-half tribes built a great altar by Jordan upon their return to their inheritance east of the Jordan River. The other Israelites, surmising that this altar gave evidence of idolatry, prepared to go to war against them. Although the concern of the other Israelites was right, their initial accusation and response were based on a faulty conclusion.

A lack of submission to authority and an unwillingness to receive advice and rebuke is another cause of evil surmisings. Responsible brethren are sometimes accused of selfishness, lack of love, or even dishonesty as they endeavor to maintain purity in the church and to help others grow in Christian experience. If we do not appreciate advice or rebuke, we become vulnerable to assuming that the one who gave it has ulterior motives.

Envy leads to evil surmisings. When King Saul heard the women of Israel praising David for his military success, he envied David and suspected his intents and actions. If we allow envy in our hearts toward others because of their abilities, circumstances, popularity, or position, we will find it easy to imagine negative things about them.

What are the results of evil surmisings?

If allowed to grow, inaccurate conclusions produce evil speaking and actions. King Saul cast his javelin at David after he let envy and evil surmisings grow in his heart. He eventually followed David in blind pursuit to destroy him. Evil surmisings will finally drive us to bite and devour and eventually to consume one another (Galatians 5:15). This may include darts of unjust accusations and unkind words, resulting in hurt feelings and broken relationships.

How can we avoid evil surmisings?

We must love one another with a pure heart fervently. Sincere love desires the best for others and believes the best about others. It "thinketh no

evil" and willingly gives the benefit of the doubt. Sincere love esteems others better than ourselves and looks for the good in others. It counts others worthy of respect and honor (1 Timothy 6:2).

When issues and needs arise, sincere love seeks to restore others in the spirit of meekness.

We must also refrain from passing judgment too quickly. When the apostle Paul had heard that there were divisions in the church at Corinth, his response was, "I partly believe it." At times we hear of problems in the life of an individual or a congregation. Rather than quickly accepting the report as fact, we should follow Paul's example of being reserved about information we have received even though we think that it has some merit and may need to be addressed. We need to be especially careful in judging the motives of other people.

Contentment will help us to avoid evil surmisings.

It is difficult for evil surmisings to grow in a heart that is truly content. A contented person will not surmise evil about the person with whom he deals in business or those who have more that he does in goods, talents, or opportunities.

To avoid occasions for evil surmisings, we must put forth the necessary effort to communicate effectively. In Joshua 22 the children of Israel first sent princes to ask the two and one-half tribes the reason for the altar that was built. Through communication the matter was understood and brought to rest.

We too should be discussing is-

sues as brethren. When needs become evident, we should prayerfully use the brotherly address. Throwing hints or communicating indirectly makes understanding difficult and prepares a seedbed for

surmising.

Let us employ the grace of God to avoid the snare of evil surmising and to think honestly and charitably of one another.

Brother Daniel., DE



Virtues in an Age of Vice

Mankind was created in the image of God and thus had a virtuous beginning. History, however, reveals the vices of mankind that resulted from the Fall. Man became so violent that God destroyed the first world and began again with one family. However, mankind in his fallen state soon sank once more into his natural wickedness.

We should not dwell long on the vileness of humanity and the resulting misery (Ephesians 5:11, 12). However, we do need to reckon with man's debauchery and his continual drifting from truth to corruption. Society today blurs the issue by excusing man's vices as a weakness or a hopelessly uncorrectable lifestyle.

In contrast to a decadent society, the Word of God clearly identifies right and wrong. We must base our concepts of morality on the Word of God and identify vices as sin so that we do not begin thinking and

living like the world. We must also believe that Christians are called to live righteous lives and not to merely keep themselves from wickedness. We are to be living epistles, "known and read of all men" (2 Corinthians 3:2).

Virtues are godly characteristics that mankind can obtain through regeneration. We can live virtuous lives through the power and wisdom derived from the divine nature that God implants within those who come to Him. The Holy Spirit guides us with the truth of the Word and inspires and enables us to live in obedience—thus producing virtuous living. Let us thank the Lord that He has provided wisdom and power to enable us to live virtuously.

What are some virtues that we should manifest in an age of vice?

Kindness is a virtue that God expects from man. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts to share with our fellow men. Our words

and deeds should come from kind thoughts. One purpose for living should be seeking ways to show kindness to others by teaching and inspiring each other and bearing one another's burdens. Our neighbors should know us by our deeds of kindness to them in the Name of Jesus.

Humility is another virtue that all Christians need to exhibit. This virtue helps us to be useful as we recognize our own inability and learn by God's grace to become useful servants in His work. This contrasts with the selfish, proud, demanding, hypocritical attitude of the world as it promotes self instead of humbly glorifying God.

Honesty is an integral virtue that is expressed in the life of the believer. We must be sincerely honest before God and practice the Golden Rule in relating to our fellow men. Honesty provides the basis for trustworthiness and confidence and should characterize the fulfilling of our business transactions and our tax obligations. The world should learn about righteousness and equity as they observe us practicing the virtues that God produces in us.

Industriousness is another virtue that God desires to see in His children. God worked and still works and has asked us to occupy until He comes. We should desire to produce more than we consume

and avoid all forms of welfare. We should be productive and use our profits to provide for our families and to build the kingdom of heaven rather than wasting resources on luxurious living. We should use time and talents to spread the Gospel and build relationships with others. This earth provides our only opportunity to lay up treasures in heaven.

Purity is an integral virtue God calls His people to possess. Only pure souls will ever see God in heaven. The world is in a very immoral morass; we cannot compare ourselves with society to decide what is pure.

We understand morality only by learning the precepts of God in His Word. We need to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus and follow His commandments regarding social relationships. This includes maintaining a proper reserve between the genders and showing proper respect toward all. We should abhor the vices that have made advertising such a lucrative business. We must maintain high courtship standards among us, standards that lay the foundation for pure and happy marriages. Our homes should be adorned with innocent young souls who grow up to display the grace of God in this sinful world.

Contentedness and thankfulness are also virtues we need to possess. God has been so gracious, and His

tender mercies are new every day. As those who are regenerated, we need to realize how much we depend on divine help. We should thank Him daily for His aid instead of being greedy and selfish regarding the material blessings we have received. We should utilize all our possessions to the glory of God and as a benefit to mankind. Above all else, we should desire to share the many spiritual blessings we receive

through the church and by the aid of His Holy Spirit.

Prayer and meditation on the Word of God are key virtues that grace the lives of Christians. We become a sweet savor to our Lord and a useful witness to this world as our lives express virtues that bring us joy now and prepare us to live with Him in heaven.

Brother John, PA.



Beatitude Series (Part 5) **"Blessed Are the Merciful"**

The Greek word translated merciful in this Beatitude has been defined as "the outward manifestation of pity; it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it." Although I can store up pity in my heart, I have not shown mercy unless I have offered aid. Mercy will act. I might pity my neighbors whose house burned to the ground, but I have not shown mercy unless I can help them and I choose to help them.

The Scriptures refer to the mercies of God more than three hundred times. "His mercy is for ever."

"Great are his tender mercies." "His tender mercies are over all his works." We cannot praise Him enough for these tender mercies; they are our only hope. But praise should not be our only response. God's intentions for us are also revealed. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

Showing mercy is not a natural tendency; it is of God. "Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy" (Psalm 62:12). If we are controlled by our carnal nature, we will not be ministers of mercy. Instead, we probably will develop thought patterns like the following to excuse ourselves from being merciful.

"Why should I help him? Last

week when I was overwhelmed with work, he saw my dilemma and did nothing to help." This "eye for eye" philosophy waits for mercy to come its way before it shows any kindness. God says that even sinners do this, but He calls His children higher. If He had waited to extend His mercy to us till we showed Him kindness, how would we have fared?

"He made his own bed, and now he can lie in it. He was warned, but he ignored my advice." These thoughts may be true in some cases, but "mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:13). If God had dealt with us in this way, what a dreadful situation we would be in!

"I am a victim of circumstances—the one who always receives unfair treatment." This disease of self-pity will keep us from seeing the needs of others rather than moving us to help. We know

what we really deserve. None of us can tally up the number of times that we have been forgiven. Jesus introduced the attitude that His children should have: "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8).

"They shall obtain mercy." God's just law of sowing and reaping is evident in these verses: "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy" (James 2:13). "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul" (Proverbs 11:17). "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful" (2 Samuel 22:26). If the mercy we show our fellow men is the measuring cup for the mercy we receive, how diligent we should be!

Being all fashioned out of the
same dust,

Let us be merciful as well as just.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

—*Brother Stephen R.*



*Praise, O Praise Our
God and King*

*Praise, O praise our God and King!
Hymns of adoration sing;
For His mercies still endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.*

*Praise Him that He gave the rain
To mature the swelling grain;
And hath bid the fertile field
Of its precious fruits to yield.*

*Praise Him for our harveststore,
He hath filled the garnerfloor;
And for richer food than this,
Pledge of everlasting bliss.*

*Glory to our bounteous King;
Glory let creation sing;
Glory to the Father, Son,
And blest Spirit, Three in One.*

—H. W. Baker