DEVOUT AND HONORABLE WOMEN

("Take heed lest ye fall" 1 Cor.10:12)

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Webster defines "devout" as warmly devoted,sincere.And Strong's Exhaustive Concordance says:"devout",religious,worship.

Of the word "honorable",Webster says;doing credit to the possessor;consistant with untarnished reputation;characterized by integrity;ethical.While Strong says:decorous;good;well done.

Acts 13:49-50,says,"Andthe word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.But the Jews stirred up devout and honorable women,and the chief men of the city,and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas,and expelled them out of their coasts."

Devout and honorable women,in the church today,can exert a great influence for good or evil.It behooves us therefore,to "study to show ourselves approved unto God"(2 Tim.2:15).In so doing we will be guided by the Holy Spirit in our daily activities;and exercising righteous judgement we will not be easily carried away on a tide of popular or public opinion as were the devout and honorable women at Antioch in Pisidia.If we will always check first with the scriptures,before we act or speak;we will not be so easily deceived by vain words as was mother Eve.

The influence of a devout and honorable woman is recognized by all of us as carrying much weight.So if the devil can get a devout and honorable woman,or a group of them to iniate or carry on a whispering campain against the truth,or an individual christian,or a family:he just about has things going his way.And any one who finds sufficient pleasure in hearing these harsh and evil reports about a brother or sister,is,according to Paul just as guilty as the mis-guided woman who is telling these things.Rom.1:32, "Who knowing the judgement of God,that they that commit such things are worthy of death,not only do the same,but have pleasure in them that do them."

To speak harshly of a brother or sister is not a christian work of light therefore it is a work of darkness.(Titus 3:2)To speak evil of no man,to be no brawlres,but gentle,shewing all meekness unto all men." We are commanded to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,but rather to reprove them.Eph.5:7-11,"Be not ye therefore partakers with them.For ye were sometimes darkness,but now are ye light in the Lord:walk as children of the light:(for the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,but rather reprove them."

If we always discourage and refuse to listen to harsh and evil reports about the weaknesses and faults of our brethren and sisters;then we are not "finding pleasure" in or encouraging these "unfruitful works of darkness."

Women are commanded to teach other women (Titus 2:3-5).But how would we as devout and honorable women "reprove" these "unfruitful works of darkness?? Paul says that,"All things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light"(Eph.5:13).We know thay the word of God is the light by which we must live and do our teaching.Ps.119:105 & 130,"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,and a light unto my path.The entrance of thy words giveth light;it giveth understanding unto the simple".1 Jno.1:7, "But if we walk in the light,as he is in the light,we have fellowship one with another,and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin" Also Jno.2:8-11,"Again,a new commandment I write unto you,which thing is true in him and in you:because the darkness is past,and the true light now shineth.He that saith he is in the light,and hateth his brother,is in darkness even until now.He that loveth his brother abideth in light,and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth,because the darkness hath blinded his eyes." It is the word of God that will be read back to us in the day of judgement: by which the actions of our everyday lives will be judged;and by which we will be saved or lost eternally.Rev.20:12,"And I saw the dead small and great stand before God;and the books were opened:and another book was opened, which is the book of life:and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books,according to their works."

Speaking,or listening to,and thereby encouraging harsh gossip and evil-speaking about an absent brother or sister is not worth the penalty that will be paid for indulging in these sins.

First of all the christian life is to be one of love.Rom.12:9-10,"Let love be without dissimulation.Abhor that which is evil;cleave to that which is good.Be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love;in honor preferring one another." Rom.13:9-10,"---Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself

Love worketh no ill to his neighbor:therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Gal.5:22,tells usthat love is one of the fruits of the spirit. 1 Pet. 1:22,"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto the unfeigned love of the brethren,see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." If we love our brethren and sisters as our own selves,we will not say,or listen to without protest;or repeat anything damaging or hurtful to their reputation,any more than we would be shouting our own faults from the house tops.1 Cor.13:13,says,"And nowabideth faith,hope, and charity,these three;but the greatest of these is charity." 1 Cor.13:1-3 tells how important charity,or love is;and how vain our very best efforts are without this fruit of the spirit."Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,and have not charity,I am become as sounding brass,or a tinkling cymbal.And though I have the gift of prophesy,and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge;and though I have all faith,so that I could remove mountains and have not charity,I am nothing.And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,and though I give my body to be burned,and have not charity,it profiteth me nothing."Now we know how important love is:let us read verses 4-7 and see just what this charity or love is:"Charity suffereth long,and is kind;charity enveith not;charity vaunteth not itself,is not puffed up,doth not behave itself unseemly,seeketh not her own,is not easily provoked,thinketh no evil;rejoiceth not in iniquity,but rejoiceth in truth;beareth all things,believeth all things,hopeth all things,endureth all things.Charity never faileth."

If we have wronged a brother or sister in any way:we should confess our fault to them,asking their forgiveness.Matth.5:23-24,"If thou bring thy gift to the altar,and there rememberest thy brother hath aught against thee;leave there thy gift before the altar,and go thy way;first be reconciled to thy brother,and then come and offer thy gift."

If a brother or sister has wronged us,we are to go to them:Matth.18:15-17,"Moreover if thy brother tresspass against thee,go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone:if he shall hear thee,thou hast gained thy brother But if he will not hear thee,take with thee one or two more,that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.And if he shall neglect to hear them,tell it to the church:but if he neglect to hear the church,let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." But this is all to be done in the spirit of meekness and love;not in spite and hatred these have no place in the christian's life.Gal.6:1,"Brethren,if a man be overtaken in a fault,ye which are spiritual,restore such a one in the spirit of meekness;considering thyself,lest thou also be tempted." And we have learned that this love must be from our hearts;not feigned.

And regardless of how a brother or sister responds to our loving overtures for peace:we must forgive them,even as the Saviour forgives us,remembering our sins no more when he forgives them.If we don't forgive them,we condemn ourselves to eternal death.Because only if we from the heart forgive everyone our brother,will we be forgiven.Matth.18:32-35,"Then his lord, after that he had called him,said unto him,O thou wicked servant,I forgave thee all that debt,because thou desiredst me:shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant,even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth,and delivered him to the tormentors,till he should pay all that was due unto him.So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their tresspasses." This is truth and light.This is as plain a command as we have in the bible; and it is seriously important.

Maybe you can't,just in a breath,in a moment completely forgive your brother or sister.But we know the christian life is a life of growth.1 Pet.2:1-2,"Wherefore laying aside,all guile,and hypocricies,and envies,and all evilspeakings,as newborn babes,desire the sincere milk of the word,that ye may grow thereby."Also,2 Pet.3:18,"But grow in grace,and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

The Lord looks on our hearts,and the reins of our hearts;not just at our actions.Rev.2:23,"---I am he that searcheth the reins and the hearts:and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." 1 Sam.16:7,"--- For the Lord seeth not as man seeth;for man looketh on the outward appearance,but the Lord looketh on the heart."

We can pray for strength.Rom.10:12,says,"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Matth.26:41,"Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation the spirit indeed is willing,but the flesh is weak." 1 Cor.10:13,"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man:but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which ye are able;but will

with the temptation also make a way to escape,that ye may be able to bear it!

We can feed constantly on the word of spirit and life (Jno.6:63).1 Tim. 4:13 & 15-16,"Till I come ,give attendance to reading,to exhortation,to doctrine.---Meditate on these things;give thyself wholly to them;that thy profiting may appear unto all.Take heed unto thyself,and unto the doctrine; continue in them:for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself,and them that hear thee." We should meditate on these things day and night.Josh.1:8, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth;but thou shalt meditate therein day and night,that thou mightest observe to do according to all that is written therein---." Ps.1:1-2,"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,nor standeth in the way of sinners,nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.But his delight is in the law of the Lord Lord;and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

We can thus renew our spirits day by day.1 Cor.4:1-6,"For which cause we faint not;but though our outward man perish,yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Eph.4:22-24,"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man,which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts;and be renewed in the spirit of your mind;and that ye put on the new man,which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Col.3:8-10,"But now ye also put off all these:anger,wrath,malice,blasphemy,filthy communication out of your mouth.Lie not one to another,seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds;and have put on the new man,which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

We must make a determined and continuous effort to put to a constant death the deeds and thoughts of the flesh.Rom.8:13,"For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die:but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body,ye shall live." We must make sure at all times that we are being led by the Spirit of God,thereby putting to death the deeds of the body.

We must refuse to even think harsh and disparaging thoughts about a brother or sister.2 Cor.10:5,"Casting down imaginations,and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Matth.12:34-37,"O generation of vipers,how can ye,being evil,speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things:and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.But I say unto you,that every idle word that men shall speak,they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement.For by thy words thou shalt be justified,and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." So unless we allow our hearts to be filled with hatred,spite,resentment and so forth,we will not speak these things.These things will condemn us,said our Saviour.These things also make for strife,and is following an earthly, sensual,devilish type of wisdom.Jas.3:14-16,"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts,glory not,and lie not against the truth.This wisdomdecendeth not from above,but is earthly,sensual,devilish.For where envying and strife is,there is confusion and every evil work." Christian love is just the opposite of these things.

Our Lord Jesus Christ from his cross,dying in agony for our sins after being tortured and humiliated,said of his tormentors:"Father forgive them; for they know not what they do"(Luke 23:34).

The martyr Stephen,said from the center of the punishing,torturing, killing rain of stones:"Lord,lay not this sin to their charge.And when he had said this,he fell asleep."

We know the tongue is an unruly evil full of deadly poison;it defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature;it is,itself,set on fire of hell.Jas.3:5-12.No man has tamed it.It cannot be tamed of man.But the Lord has exceeding power toward us.Eph.1:19,"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe,according to the working of his mighty power." Eph.3:20,"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think,according to the power that worketh in us." Col.1:11,"Strengthened with all might,according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

Paul said in 2 Tim.1:7,"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love,and of a sound mind."

Here again,if our body temples (1 Cor.6:19),are filled with the Holy Spirit,by laying aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness,and receiving with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save our souls (Jas.1:21) we thereby receive power to live the christian life devoutly and honorably.

Remember the empty house the Lord spoke of (Matth.12:43-45).If we simply ask forgiveness for our sins;then leave our houses (hearts) swept and

empty;then we are inviting a fall to worse depths,than those from which we are attempting to extricate ourselves.Our hearts are not vacuums.They will not remain empty.So unless they are filled to overflowing with the Spirit and thee word of God (Jno.6:63; Eph.5:18),and the love of God,then rest xxxxxxx assured the devil will fill it.Eph.3:16-19,"That hewould grant you,according to the riches of his glory,to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;and that ye,being rooted and grounded in love,may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth,and length,and depth,and height;and to know the love of Christ,which passeth knowledge,that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Remember the adulterous woman who was brought to Christ,and accused? (Jno.8:3-11).Remember he said,he that is without sin cast the first stone. He did not say,he who does not commit adultery cast the first stone.But he said,"He that is without sin." As long as we commit any sin at all,we had better not cast stones by harsh words of judgement against a brother or sister.

Paul said,"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?"(Rom.14:4). Christ said to judge not that we be not judged.He said that whatever we mete to our brother or sister;it will be measured back to us.If we accuse a brother or sister harshly to someone else,we will reap this in judgement. (Matth,7:1-5).

He that is without sin,let him cast the first stone (Jno.8).

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?(Rom.8:33).

Therefore judge nothing before the time,until the Lord come,who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness,and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts:then shall every man have praise of ~~Hx~~ God.1 Cor. 4:5.

For if we would judge ourselves,we should not be judged.1 Cor.11:31.

For he shall have judgement without mercy,that hath showed no mercy;and mercy rejoiceth against judgement.Jas.2:13.

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves:for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.1 Pet.4:8.

Submitted in christian love,

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