

Should We Be More Tolerant?

By Allen Dvorak

We preachers have just been much too hard on thieves and thievery. We have spent way too much pulpit time condemning theft when we could have been preaching on understanding, love and tolerance for thieves. We have instead insisted upon telling people that stealing is a sin and that they shouldn't behave that way.

Now, I know what the Bible says about stealing. One of the ten commandments given to the nation of Israel was "You shall not steal" (Exodus 20:15). Of course, the Law of Moses was fulfilled by Jesus and we don't live under that law any more. Still, the gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed by the inspired apostles and prophets of the New Testament also condemns theft. The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians that any thieves should stop stealing (4:28) and he actually told the Corinthians that thieves would not inherit the kingdom of heaven (1 Corinthians 6:10)! Paul seems to have believed that stealing was a sin, but then he probably also hated thieves, don't you think?

If someone steals a car, I guess the proper thing to do is to avoid referring to that person as a "thief." Identifying someone by their conduct has never helped anything, has it? It's just the way that people who considered themselves to be "morally superior" put others down. The person who stole the car probably couldn't help it anyway, since we all know that some folks are compulsive thieves. Besides, the Bible is an old book and we are a more enlightened people now.

The reasoning offered above is seen to be ridiculous when applied to stealing. Does anybody actually believe that preachers who identify theft as a sin therefore hate thieves? Is it "discrimination" to identify someone who steals as a "thief"? (Actually, it *is* – by the general meaning of the word "discriminate," i.e., to make a distinction between different things, people, etc. Modern society, however, has attached such an unsavory connotation to the word that ANY discrimination is seen as undesirable). Unfortunately, the same kind of argument is routinely used to defend other kinds of immoral behavior and to attack those who speak out against such behavior.

I personally have had enough of "political correctness." Note the craftiness of the homosexual movement which portrays any criticism of homosexuality as "discrimination" tantamount to racism. Those who identify homosexual behavior as sinful are classified as "bigots" who hate homosexuals. Never mind that the Bible identifies homosexual behavior as "vile passions," "against nature," "shameful," "error" and "debased" (Romans 1:26-28). Never mind that forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation is available to ANYONE who will turn from his sins and seek divine grace (Acts 17:30-31; Titus 2:11-14). I recognize that there are individuals who are hateful toward homosexuals, but to assume such of everyone who disapproves of that lifestyle is no more reasonable than suggesting that disapproving of thievery implies the hatred of thieves!

"Political correctness" is often used to hide the truth about certain kinds of behavior. For instance, there are those who argue that it is improper, even hateful, to refer to those who enter our country illegally as "illegal aliens." "Alien" simply means that they are not citizens (which is true) and "illegal" simply refers to their method of entry into the country, i.e., in violation of United States immigration law (which is true). The political

lobby for illegal aliens has learned well from the homosexual movement; the terms used in the national discussion of a subject can be half the battle!

Christians must not be afraid to stand up and identify what the Bible calls "sin." That won't make us popular with a large segment of the population, but, like the apostle Paul, our objective is to please God, not men (Galatians 1:10). Part of the reason that our society has lost its moral bearings is that religious people (I include the members of denominations) have become reticent to identify sin for what it is. At the same time, we must remember that the object of the preaching of the gospel is to encourage men and women to seek God. We must be plain, but not hateful. We must be firm, but not vindictive.