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What One Tolerates, The Next Accepts

by Mark White

John Wesley once wrote, "What one generation tolerates, the next generation will embrace." Both sacred and secular history have proven the truth of this assessment time and time again.

Everything from dancing to drinking, from abortion to mercy-killing, has gone from toleration to acceptance. In the home and in the church, everything from immodesty to immorality has been first allowed and then endorsed. Adulterous marriages, gambling, and other similar sins, have gone from being permitted to being sponsored. Remember when wearing shorts and attending dances were generally condemned as sinful? Now, in some places shorts are being worn to church services and dances are sometimes held in church buildings! Truly, "what one generation tolerates, the next generation will embrace."

One generation tolerated sprinkling for baptism if a person were seriously ill. The next generation accepted sprinkling for baptism as an option for everyone. One generation approved a "head" elder. The next generation appointed some elders "bishops." One generation introduced instruments of music as an aid to poor singing. The next generation demanded we worship with instruments. One generation accepted the "fellowship hall" (which, at first, was just a few tables in the basement for social meals). The next generation built gymnasiums and "Family Life Centers." One generation apologized for "hard preachers" who opposed denominationalism. The next generation saw their sons and daughters joining those

denominations. One generation spoke of the need to reach out in a "non-judgmental" way to our Catholic and Protestant friends. The next generation welcomed Presbyterians into "our fellowship" with only a handshake. One generation spoke of congregational singing as "one of our traditions." The next generation defended choruses and choirs. One generation applauded preachers who closed their sermons without an appeal for sinners to be baptized for the remission of sins. The next generation denied the gospel plan of salvation in general and baptism in particular.

What does this say to us? What is our responsibility? "You shall observe to do therefore as the Lord... hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (Deut. 5:32). "Hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13). "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Tim. 3:14). "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

The next time we are tempted to deviate from the word of God, let us remember that what we tolerate, our children will embrace! *Plain Talk 1979*

Winning Souls

Paul C. Keller

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." (Proverbs 11:30)

Let us not forget our responsibility to the lost. We have been saved by the gospel of Christ. It is ours to take that gospel to others. Truly we have been saved to serve. Paul felt himself a debtor to all men — not because of what they had done for him but because of what the Christ had done for him. He could pay his debt by preaching the gospel to others. (Rom. 1:15, 16) He said, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" and was "made all things to all men," that he

“might by all means save some.” (1 Cor. 9:16, 22). But, what debt did Paul owe that WE do not owe? Did not the same Christ who saved Paul save US? Is not the gospel by which Paul was saved the gospel by which we are saved? Is not the gospel still “the power of God unto salvation”? (Rom. 1:16) And is it not our responsibility to take this gospel to others? (Mark 16:15, 16; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Tim. 3:15) What are WE doing about it? What are YOU doing about it?

Yes, “he that winneth souls is wise.” He is working with the most valuable material (Matt. 16:26). He is doing a work that is far reaching and lasting — reaching into eternity itself. He is doing his duty — a duty enjoined upon him by the Lord and a duty that love for his fellowmen requires. (Mark 16:15; Matt. 22:39; 7:12) He is working with God. What an honor! What a privilege!

Let each of us give himself to faithfully teaching God’s truth to others, taking advantage of every opportunity to speak to our associates of the Christ and His truth, leading them to become obedient to the gospel. Let us work at the job of “winning souls.”

Just Plain Shamgar

Robert F. Turner

"And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who smote of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also saved Israel" (Jdg. 3:31).

Troy Mulhollan, one of our faithful members, used this as his text for a Wednesday night talk recently. He announced his subject, A Man Named Shamgar, and commented, "That isn't a household name around Burnet." True!

The man is mentioned only once more in the Bible — in Judges 5:6. And yet he, with Othniel (Jdg. 3:9-11), Ehud (3:15-30), and others more widely acclaimed, "also saved Israel." Does it really matter about "credits" if the deed is rightly done, and the doer serves his purpose in life?

Was Shamgar a simple working man-an ox driver? If so it wouldn't be the first or last time God used plain ordinary folk to accomplish His work. Jesus called fishermen, a tax collector, and such to announce salvation to the world. The potential in just plain folk, when serving God, is a sleeping giant. But **your** part can be played only when you throw off the debilitating concept that "God surely wouldn't use a nobody like me." In humble earthen vessels the glory is clearly seen to be of God (2 Cor. 4:7).

Why did Shamgar use an ox goad? It may have been the only type of weapon available (1 Sam. 13:19-f.); or it may have been God's way of showing that the victory is not in armor but in the Lord (1 Sam. 17:47). Brother Troy said there was no way of knowing, but suggested this plain ordinary oxen driver may simply have **used what he had**. It is not a bad thought with or without specific information.

If every plain, ordinary person could be persuaded to take what he or she has — in talent, money, opportunity — and put it to work for the Lord, we would begin to recognize the power of leaven in meal, of salt spread throughout the world, of tremendous candlepower. And, a dedicated worker will sharpen the goad, trim the candle, do whatever is possible to make the best use of what is available.

You exist for a divine purpose. There are no little people with God.