



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## Devilish Discombobulations

Dee Bowman

Confusion is one of the cleverest tools of the Devil. If he can get us confused on a matter he quickly gains an advantage. First of all, confusion breeds discouragement. We get quickly discouraged when we don't understand things. Second, confusion brings controversy, mainly because misunderstandings grow out of it. And thirdly, confusion breeds disunity. It's hard to be united on something when everybody's all mixed up.

The Devil has used confusion to retard and restrict people's understanding about a multitude of things. I want to discuss just a few to illustrate that fact.

### **Confusion about sin.**

Sin has been softened in this generation. In fact, you seldom see the word used. You'll search several issues of your local paper without even seeing the word. Actually, there's no such thing as sin to most people. Oh, they might say murder's a sin or perhaps child abuse or something like that. But pornography? Naa. How about homosexuality? Naa. Cheating? Depends on who's doing it and why. Lying? Well, sometimes it's a little wrong, but sin? Naa. Sin is called sin only in the most extreme conditions. What about God's definition of sin? He says it's "transgression of the law" (1 Jn. 3:4-5). You mean even the "little" transgressions? Yes, sir, sin is any transgression of the law. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin," God said (Jas. 4:17). You mean if I know something is good and I don't do it, God holds that against me? Yes, sir. Omission of known good is just as much a sin as murder or child abuse. And Romans 14:23 says that willfully ignoring what you believe to be right or wrong is a sin,

too: "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Sin is sin. And just because you ignore it doesn't mean it goes away. Don't be confused. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20).

### **Confusion about faith.**

The devil has confused men about faith. For instance, faith, to most people, is merely mental assent, just "accepting Christ." There's more to faith than just the admission that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. For one thing, there's no such thing as a faith that does not work. In fact, James says that "faith without works is dead, being alone" (Jas. 2:17). You mean that faith always does something to prove its validity. Yes, sir. Read how that "by faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, obeyed" (Heb. 11:8) and how that "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (Heb. 11:30). Faith is not just some feeling better felt than told; it's a conclusion not only that God is, but that He rewards "them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

### **Confusion about baptism.**

The devil has even confounded some of my own brethren about baptism. They have reached the untenable conclusion that because they've been baptized, they've been saved. Now that's true, if you want to talk about being saved initially, or being "born again" (Jn. 3:3-5). But that's what baptism does, it brings about the new birth; it doesn't assure your salvation. Once you're born, you have to begin to grow. You mean that when I've been baptized, I've not guaranteed my salvation? That's right, all you did was get ready to grow up in Christ. "If ye then be risen with Christ (I know of no other kind of being "risen" than being baptized), seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2). Paul then enumerates the things that we must "put off" and the things which we must "put on" to insure our salvation. He calls it putting on the "new man"

(Col. 3:10). Just as there's more to faith than merely acknowledging Christ as your Savior, there's more to salvation than merely being baptized.

### **Confusion about judgment.**

People are confused about the judgment. For instance, they have reduced God's judgment to little more than a kind of slapping of the hand of the sinner. How clever, the Devil! God will not admit the unrighteous into His eternal abode: "Not every one that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21) Make no mistake about it: God cannot tolerate sin. He will punish the sinner with an eternity in hell. "God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:10).

## **Skunks in the Ark**

by Al Diestelkamp

It's only an excuse aimed at avoiding personal responsibility, but we occasionally hear the charge that "there are hypocrites in the church." To deny such a charge would be fruitless considering the fact that churches are made up of fallible people, including some who may seek the fellowship of faithful Christians for nefarious reasons.

The Jerusalem church had hypocrisy among them as illustrated by the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Ac. 5). I have no doubt that this story, including God's punishment, is part of the inspired history to serve as a warning for all generations.

Sincere Christians may not always have the ability to see through the hypocrisy of others and, even when it is suspected, hope that spiritual growth will eventually result in sincere repentance.

Hypocrisy is a sin, but it can be forgiven. Indeed, all of us have likely been guilty of it. The apostle Paul had to confront it in the life of Peter regarding his dealings with Gentiles in the presence of Judaizers (Gal. 2:11-13).

It seems there have even been some hypocrites who preached Christ from envy or selfish ambition, hoping to cause trouble for the apostle Paul (Phil. 1:15-16). Though he was not defending the hypocrisy, he recognized its presence among them.

The parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24-30) and Jesus' application (vv. 36-43) suggest that Satan will plant some of his sons among the sons of the kingdom who will not be "weeded out" until the "harvest" at the end of the age. So, we should not be shocked by their presence among us. Counterfeits are only found among things and places of value.

There are hypocrites in every walk of life. However, seldom do we hear of people leaving their employment simply because of a hypocritical employer or the presence of a few co-workers who don't take their jobs seriously. And notably, few people refuse to support their favorite sports team just because of fair-weather fans.

It might be wise to take note of the fact that a couple of stinking skunks didn't drive Noah and his family out of the ark.  
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