

EXPOSED!

"There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs." Luke 12:2-3

"But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment." Matthew 12:36

These words of Jesus capture our attention as (born-again) Christians as much as any others in the Bible except for the "I never knew you, depart from Me" verse in Matthew 7:23. Recently as I was having my quiet time with Lord during my recuperation from surgery, I entered a time of confession of my sins which all of us must do when we pray, sometimes more than others. Jesus spoke to that in the model prayer He outlined for His disciples. *"Forgive us..."*

We all fall prey to areas in our lives that plague us like the Apostle Paul's reference to his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7). He attributed that directly to satan. We do not know what it was, but we do know what ours are—areas that cause us to stumble into sin, even recurrent sin if left unchecked and unconfessed. This kind of thing was much the subject of Paul's most powerful and humanly transparent chapter, Romans 7. We will study that another time.

The Spirit brought to mind the following three areas in my life that continue to plague me at times and lead to sin. This message is not about me; they never are. But my hope in sharing them with some degree of transparency, you find the courage to allow Him to shine that light into the carnal recesses of your flesh that, for reasons we do not understand, we hold onto rather than surrender—our thorns in the flesh

whether from satan or self-centeredness.

CRITICAL SPIRIT

The Bible clearly defines a critical spirit and the devastation that can result.

- Tears Down
- Wounds
- Look for what is wrong instead of what is right

"There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." Proverbs 12:18

*"And the tongue is a fire, the very world of unrighteousness; the tongue is set among our body's parts as that which defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell...no one among mankind can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people, **who have been made in the likeness of God**; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way."*
From James 3:6-10

The CURE:

(Jesus said) *"Do not judge, so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged;"* Matthew 7:1-2

"Don't criticize one another, brothers and sisters. Anyone who defames or judges a fellow believer defames and judges the law. If you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge." James 4:11 CSB

"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who

hear.” Ephesians 4:29

Use words that build up, encourage, and constructive even if critical. Maintain a spirit of love!

CONTENTIOUS ATTITUDE

To be sure we are on the same page, *contentious* means:

- *Disagreeable*
- *Argumentative*

Looking for an argument. Have a differing opinion on everything. Pick, pick, pick is how some define it. These two verses from Proverbs describe such a person well.

“Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire (ignite the flame or cause it to grow or get hotter), so is a contentious man to kindle strife.” Proverbs 26:1

“It is better to live on a corner of the roof (find a small place to get away from such a woman or man), than in a house shared with a contentious woman.” Proverbs 25:24

The CURE:

(Jesus said) *“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.”* Matthew 5:9

In the same chapter in which James decried how terrible a weapon the tongue can be, he said,

“...But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, free of hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” James 3:17-18

Look for ways to agree or promote peace and harmony in your house and church. There are times that will not be possible or

happen, so work to maintain it when you can.

CONDESCENDING TONE

This is about ***how you come across to others*** as much or more than what you say. You may have heard the expression, *“it is not what you say but how you say it.”* This applies here. Two areas we must be aware of:

- Sound (come across) like you are boastful about having more than someone.
- Make people feel like you think you are superior or they are inferior.

The best verse for both comes from Jesus story about the two men who prayed.

“Now He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt...The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.” Luke 18:11

The CURE. Humility

“The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.” Proverbs 15:33

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;” Philippians 2: 3

There is an old, wise saying from President Theodore Roosevelt worthy of our remembrance for this potential “thorn in the flesh”,

“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much

you care."

Three questions to end on:

- Which one(s) of these three are your thorn(s) in the flesh?
- Have you taken them to the Lord in confession seeking deliverance by the Holy Spirit?
- If it is possible, have you sought forgiveness from those you have wounded or offended?

For Christ's sake,

Walter