

Comedy Central

“What’s on second...Who’s on third?” - the famous exchange between Abbot & Costello ranks among the funniest comedy routines of all time. But, that kind of humor just isn’t funny anymore. What makes us laugh today has grown graphically sarcastic, demeaning and perverted. Paul has something to say about that in today’s Templates of Truth.

Paul begins the fifth chapter of his letter to the Ephesians with the admonition – *be imitators of God* (Ephesians 5:1). The Greek word translated *imitators* is where we get our English word, mimic. In order to mimic God, we have to know how God is, or as Paul puts it later in this chapter, *learn what is pleasing to the Lord* (Ephesians 5:10). To do that, demands that we become a passionate student of God’s Word and spend intimate time with Him in prayer – that is how we get to know God. In his discourse on the subject, Paul defines things we should not allow into our lives because they are not things that in any way characterize God. Among them, *there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting* (Ephesians 5:4).

You would think Paul had Dish TV and Comedy Central streaming into ancient Ephesus. These three words make up the bulk of comedy & humor in today’s entertainment media – filthiness, silly talk and coarse jesting. *Filthiness* refers to general obscenities and characterizes any talk that is degrading, disgraceful, dirty or shameful. *Silly talk* translates a Greek word from where we get our English word, moron. It refers to talk that is dull, stupid, & foolish. It describes absurd people who turn everything into a pointless joke or pun. *Coarse jesting* is literally translated “able to turn easily,” and describes a person who has the gift of quick wit, but notoriously expresses it in vulgar, suggestive and obscene ways. It would seem that Paul identified the three qualifications for a successful stand-up comedian in today’s world, for those are the elements that crown the winners of the “last comic standing.”

What humors the American culture today is the comic who makes fun of people or himself and the circumstances of life. Especially those who are caught in unethical, immoral and criminal ruin, the seriousness of their offense is medicated & anesthetized with the monologues of late night television. That strategy helps shape the perception that bad isn’t so bad after all if you can find the humor in it and laugh away all the guilt. Rather than make fun of people’s mistakes, Paul says, *it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret* (Ephesians 5:12). Not so in America! If you get arrested, get caught or get crazy, you’ll likely be the subject of Leno, Conan and Letterman for weeks on end! Humor in America has taken the shame & disgust out of disgrace.

People today might find these routines hilariously funny, but through Paul, God says such humor is *not fitting*. That means it is not appropriate or effective in imitating God. God doesn’t find such humor funny, and neither should His people seeking to mimic Him. Unfortunately, that is not the testimony of many Christians based on the amount of money we spend at the box office or the comedy house. It is not reflected in the movies we watch and the jokes we repeat. We

will often excuse our ROFL response with some candid explanation, “I know its bad, but its soooooo funny!” It is our flesh that is being entertained, not our spirit. It is the “old man” laughing, not the “new self.” Paul’s command about this is forthright – *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them* (Ephesians 5:6-7). Why would a believer in Christ want to be entertained and humored by words that invoke the wrath of God? If we pay, if we watch, if we listen, if we forward the email, and if we laugh - we are partakers.

This passage challenges us to raise a higher standard for our entertainment value. It demands that we do a better job in censoring what we put in our DVD library and what we allow our children & family to see and hear on television. Ungodly humor permeates the internet and our children are exposed to it through popular sites such as YouTube, MySpace and a host of other social, entertaining and educational sites. The more we partake, the more desensitized we become to the Godly repulsion of its content. The more we are desensitized, the more vile & repulsive the humor has to become to keep us entertained and laughing. What makes you laugh? America’s humor has degenerated into more wicked emptiness. That is why Abbot & Costello are more a “laughing stock” today than a laughing duo.

That’s today’s Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

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