

A Rich Fool

On one occasion as Jesus was preaching to a “crowd” of people, a certain man “from the crowd” interrupted Jesus, and said “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me,” Luke 12:13. Jesus replied by first asking the man a question, it being, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you,” Luke 12:14, and He then admonished the man, saying “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses,” Luke 12:15. Then, in order to vividly illustrate the truthfulness of the statement that one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses, Jesus related the following parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully (v. 16). And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops (v. 17)? So he said, I will do this I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods (v. 18). And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry (v. 19). But God said to him, **Fool!** This night your soul will be required of you: then whose will those things be which you have provided (v. 20)? So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (v. 21).

God called this man a “fool!” His contemporaries probably considered him very wise and a great success. Obviously, from his usage of the personal pronouns “I” and “my,” he considered himself anything but a “fool!” But God, Who “created man in His Own image” (Gen. 1:27), knows man better than man knows himself. Hence, when God calls a man a “fool” you can be sure that He is completely correct!

Why was he a “fool” in the sight of God? It was **not** because he was “rich.” It was **not** because he was a good farmer, or because he was successful in his work. It was **not** because he had to “build greater” barns to house all his “crops” and “goods.”

Without doubt, the real reason lies in that which is inferred in the statement, “So is he who lays up treasures **for himself**, and is not rich toward God,” v. 21). This man had been more concerned about the earthly security of his body than the eternal security of his soul! Hence, God called him a “fool!” What would you call him?

But this happens all the time. People are concerned about life insurance, job security, social security, retirement benefits, and almost every kind of “security” except **soul** security! They fret themselves about the **here** and ignore the **hereafter**, seemingly oblivious to the fact that “it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment,” Heb. 9:27, and that the results of the “judgment” will be determined by the preparation, or lack of preparation, which characterized a person while he (or she) was alive in the flesh (2 Cor. 5:10)! People don’t just live **out** of Christ, and die **in** Christ — regardless of what preachers may say when they “preach their funerals!” In brief, a person dies the way he lives! Friend, in your present condition, are you a “fool?”

**** —B. Witherington

Should We Apologize?

By Joe R. Price

Last weekend at a pride parade in Marikina, Philippines (near Manila), members of the Church of Freedom in Christ Ministries gathered to apologize for how Christians (i.e., Roman Catholics) have treated the LGBT community (cnn.com). Their banner said “We’re here to apologize for the ways that we as Christians have harmed the LGBT community”. The banner

said things like this: “I’m sorry...for hiding behind religion when really I was just scared....I’ve looked down on you instead of honoring your humanity...for not listening...for judging you.” This group’s hubris to apologize for someone else is especially rich. (You can apologize for yourself, but you cannot apologize for others.)

The Bible says God loves every sinner and hates every sin (John 3:16; Ps.45:7). Therefore, those who love and fear God “*hate evil*” and “*love good*” (Psa. 97:10; Prov. 8:13; Amos 5:15). We must abhor every sin, yet in doing so we must be careful not to convey disgust for the person committing the sin. (How do we expect to save the sinner holding disgust in our heart for the person?) Jesus truly hated sin, yet His love and compassion for sinners was undeniable (Matt. 9:36-38). He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). So must we.

Since this group apologized to LGBT people, let me illustrate the point here. Leviticus 18:22 says “*You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.*” Notice the verse does say that the sinner is an abomination, but that “*it*” — the action, the sin — is an abomination. I Timothy 1:9-10 says God’s law judges and condemns sodomites equally with other fornicators, murderers, kidnappers, liars, and perjurers. Their actions are abominable before God. This is the battleground of faith.

When we use God’s word to show the sinfulness of conduct we do not do so out of fear or arrogance, but humbly as sinners who have been saved from our own sins, and who now want other sinners to know their spiritual danger and be saved in Christ through repentance and obedience to Him (Titus 3:1-3).

When we listen to LGBT (and other sinners) we hear people desperately trying to fit in and be accepted — by themselves and by others. Contentment with yourself is found in God’s love that forgives your sins in Christ. Christ’s invitation to come to Him does not sanction sin. It calls every sinner to repent and replace sin’s despair with God’s forgiving fellowship (Matt. 11:28-30). We do not apologize for offering God’s salvation to all sinners — including LGBT!

Pope Francis and the Death Penalty

According to the Friday, Aug. 3, 2018 issue of the **Tampa Bay Times**, Pope Francis, on Aug. 2, described the death penalty as “an attack on human dignity,” and declared that the church will work “with determination” to abolish capital punishment worldwide. According to the Aug. 3 issue of the **Los Angeles Times**, Pope Francis has approved an update to the **Catechism** of the Catholic church to “exclude the death penalty.” Under **no** circumstance, in the Pope’s view, is capital punishment to be regarded as admissible.

This announcement on the part of the Pope will have far-reaching consequences. For example, according to **ABC News**, “within hours of Thursday’s announcement, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo vowed to introduce legislation to remove the death penalty from New York State Law.” Doubtlessly, many others will do likewise.

This action, and the reason thereof, puts the Pope in complete opposition to the Bible! He opposes the death penalty because, in his words, it is an “attack on human dignity.” In contrast, please note Gen. 9:6 wherein **God** said: “*Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God He made man.*” It was out of respect for “human dignity” (the fact that man was created in the “*image of God*”) that God first **commanded** the death penalty for murderers. Space forbids a current discussion of “the death penalty,” but the fact remains that, in both the Old and New Testament, God has divinely authorized the infliction of capital punishment for capital offenses. Now, the Pope declares the death penalty as being

“inadmissible” under all circumstances. It was out of respect for “human dignity,” the value of human life, that God first commanded that such be administered in certain cases!

In contrast to Pope Francis in the year 2018, we note the position held by Pope Pius XII. In an address given on Sept. 14, 1952 he said: “when it is a question of the execution of a condemned man, the State does not dispose of the individual’s right to live. In this case it is reserved to the public power to deprive the condemned person of the enjoyment of life in expiation of the crime when, by his crime, he has already disposed himself of his right to live.”

Hence, we have one pope (supposedly the Vicar of Christ on earth) taking a position diametrically opposed to that taken by a previous pope! And, if Pope Francis has his way (and he probably will!), then it will make for a change in the **Catechism**, the official document of Roman Catholic teaching!

This illustrates what happens when people exchange the word of God for the doctrines and commandments of men. In this biblical dispensation, we are to be governed by the “*New Testament*,” of which Jesus Christ is “*the mediator*,” Heb. 9:15). Moreover, “*the word of the Lord endures forever*,” I Peter 1:23, and by it we will be judged in that last day, John 12:48! The Pope and Roman Catholicism is a modern day illustration of the “*falling away*” about which the apostle Paul so clearly warned in 2 Thess. 2:3-4.

Beloved, it behooves you and me to seriously study God’s word, to “*rightly*” divide the same, 2 Tim. 2:15, and to **obey** its sacred precepts. This is the way which is right and which cannot be wrong!

*** — B. Witherington