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The Threat of the Enabler

By JIMMY TUTEN
From GUARDIAN OF TRUTH

FEW is the number of those who have not seen firsthand the potential danger of the Enabler. While their fruit is apparent, some may not have recognized its source. In this treatise an attempt to identify both the Enabler and his work will be carried out with the prayer that it will help the cause of Christ, even in a small way.

The Enabler: A Clarification

In this writer's circle of activity at least, the term "enabler" is something new. In the past it has not been included in my glossary of words. Standard dictionaries define the term "enabler" thus: "to make able, provide the means, opportunity, power, or authority, to make possible or effective." In this context an enabler is one who makes it possible for someone to do something responsibly or irresponsibly. By providing the circumstances, whether negative or positive, one is encouraged in whatever action is taken, right or wrong.

Parents, for example, make it possible for their offspring to grow into responsible beings, if they provide proper direction. On the other hand, by their failure to stress responsibility, they enable the child to be shiftless and non-dependable. Parents must enable their children in the development of proper character. Through negligence, carelessness or lack of forethought it is possible for the parent to provide the circumvention of responsibility. Thus, a child reared in this type of environment is likely to develop a general disposition of shiftlessness and unreliableness. It is generally an accepted conclusion that the irresponsible disposition readily apparent in some of our young people can be traced to parents who provide the means for a convenient way of life, rather than the acceptance of moral obligations and responsibilities. The sense of moral responsibility is lacking in so many. Enablers do great harm, that knows no end.

The demands of God for the refinement and training of the mind do not allow the support of the irresponsible lifestyle so prevalently seen (Phil. 4:4-6). Yet there is an increase in the obvious display of adamant refusal to be directed (call it "indifference" if you wish) by intelligent understanding based on biblical concepts. When a mother or several children violates her convictions concerning adultery and has an on-going affair over he protests of her husband, family and brethren, rebellion to God exists. The sadness is compounded by the sowing of the seed of irresponsibility toward morality and the increase of disrespect for the will of God. She enables her children to follow in her steps. Her example provides the setting for duplication in their lives. She enables them to fail in contributing something positive to society.

Brethren we cannot be oblivious to the need of our steps being ordered by the Word of God so that iniquity will not have dominion over us (Psa. 119:133; Jer. 10:23). As we view our brethren displaying multiple definitions of sin in their attempt to sort out general conditions that are out of control in their personal lives, we see another display of the failure to follow the directives of the Word (I Tim. 6:2-6). As is the case with contemporary society, the church is currently faced with a moral dilemma. It is obvious that too many of us have been enablers, when we should have been standard bearers. Hopefully, before all is lost, there will be as in society "a rediscovery of the fact that there is something radically wrong with all of us" (Tony Campolo, Chairman: Dept. of Sociology, Eastern College in Pennsylvania). Not just on the part of a few preachers and elders, but throughout the brotherhood. We need to return to the "old path" of a God directed life. Personal awareness of responsibility and accountability is essential to the welfare of each of us. We must enable others to do likewise, we need to recapture the language and mean-

ing of these things and address ourselves to them in a meaningful way in body, mind and spirit. "That ye put off the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another" (Eph. 4:22-25).

At the risk of sounding redundant let it be said again that we must not enable people to feel little restraint in the pursuit of selfish interests. We must help them develop a responsible philosophy of life that is Bible centered. This cannot be done until the necessary discipline is provided. Instead of enabling people to be irresponsible, let us provide what it takes for them to make a positive contribution to society. Let us return to teaching what God says about moral responsibility.

Perhaps a more practical approach to the problem will help if a question and answer is given: just what is an Enabler?

You Are An Enabler If

1. *In your relationship with your children* you pamper them, yield to their every whimsical desire, provide them with everything they want, provide no family chores, and do not teach them personal responsibility. Rest assured that the irresponsible control that society encourages will lead to tacit approval of sin in all its forms. It encourages the short-sighted pursuit of pleasure, the loss of the feeling of restraint, a lack of responsibility to others and a destruction of the family ties. If you love your children then do for them what true love demands: "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Teach them the value of work (I Thess. 4:11), the importance of pride in what they do (Eccl. 5:10) and of the sin of slothfulness

(Eccl. 10:18).

The following thoughts will help to analyze the problem:

(a) Your child is unruly in the home, he has disciplinary problems in school and when you take him to the services of the church he becomes almost impossible to handle. But it's a stage he's going through and so other than a threat here and there, a little slap on the wrist once in a while and some firmer action when you become exasperated, you do very little about the situation. *You are an enabler!* Your child needs *firm* discipline. Read Proverbs 13:24, with special notice given to "he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

(b) Your child is belligerent and quarrelsome, he tosses the head and talks back to you. But he's just a high-spirited child who will grow out of it. You avoid upsetting him, you do not confront him and you do not say anything to trigger him. *You are an enabler!* Read Proverbs 19:18, with special notice to "let not thy soul spare for his crying."

(c) Your child is now grown, he's married, he quarrels with his spouse, they get physical sometime, he's running home with criticism of his wife. You agree that his wife is self-centered, you let him know this and encourage him not to put up with it (he can come home anytime he wants to). Read Ephesians 5:25-31, paying close attention to "for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and they two shall be one flesh."

(d) Your child, though grown and with a family is somewhat shiftless, will not work steadily, moves from job to job (it's always someone else's fault) and does not pay his debts with consistency. He spends recklessly and foolishly for the latest stripe package for his new four wheeler and the latest in stereo equipment; he increases his gun collection at the expense of sacrificing the needs of his wife and children. If he gets too far in debt he appeals for another loan to be added to what he already owes. He knows you will not let him down. You give in just one more time. *You are an enabler!* Read I Thessalonians 4:11-12, with special note given to "walk honestly toward them that are without."

2. *You are an enabler if in the*

local church you witness and/or become party to factionalism, strife, bickering and divisiveness and do not seek a biblical solution to the problem. Though we deplore strife and division, to defend non-confrontation of error and remain silent when we should be reproving and rebuking, is sin (2 Tim. 4:2-3). We must not enable the sinful and/or unconverted brethren (the troubles of spiritual Israel) to gain a stronger foothold in their war against standards of truth and righteousness, when a brother comes into one of the congregations of God's people and shows that he is a false teacher by advocating everything from Calvinism to adulterous marriages, or that he is a heretic because he wants to bind his opinions and judgments upon the brethren even at the risk of destroying peace, they need to be dealt with forcefully, yet in a kind, loving, brotherly manner (Rom. 16:17). When there is a furtherance of the divisions and a refusal to repent then there must (given the seriousness of the situation) be some *marking* (Rom. 16:17), *rejecting* (Tit. 3:10) and *withdrawing* (2 Thess. 3:6). Those who scripturally react to the turmoil caused and damage done to the souls of the saints are *not divisive in such action nor the sowers of discord*. The real enemy is the perpetrator of strife and divisiveness. How can one possibly profess to be faithful when, after having enlisted in the army of the Lord, he fails to thus fight the good fight of faith (Eph. 6:11-12)?

The following Items Will Help Us To Analyze The Problem:

(a) *A brother comes into the assembly from another congregation.* At first he is passive somewhat and appears to be uninvolved. This is followed in time by positive input in various classes. As the familiarity of the situation increases, criticisms of procedures and methods begin. Brethren try kindly to deal with the criticizer, but since men come to personify matters and issues that inflame them, the factious man begins to identify his objectors as the embodiment of the issues that are intolerable to him. Though opinions, expediences and personal judgments demand forbearance, a party spirit ensues and divisiveness develops. We know that this sinful condition should never have

occurred. You know that it proceeds from a heart and mind destitute of truth. So what do *you* do? Do you show your disapproval, or do you stand around shaking your head? Know assuredly that anything short of a forthright defense of what is right will not be pleasing to God. To thus encourage the trouble-maker is to *enable him* to further his divisiveness. Such action will never bring one to repentance. In situations like this one cannot be an enabler.

(b) *A brother with a self-righteous attitude constantly criticizes and condemns others who do not measure up to his self-imposed standards of righteousness.* We are aware of the many expressions of disapproval expounded by this man. You know that a great deal of his criticisms constitute plain fastidiousness, pickiness and as the Lord put it, "beholding the mote that is in thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:3). You know that more often than not the ones thus criticized are not aware of what's happening until the criticisms run full circle. By then great damage has been done. You wonder why this "sound" brother does not practice Matthew 18 in these personal matters, or why in the interest of peace his personal preferences are not controlled with an attitude of patience and longsuffering (Rom. 12:9-10,18). You know that they should be looking at others thusly as a reminder to change themselves. So what do *you* do? Do you try to be a fence sitter in no man's land or remain silent for fear of starting another fight on another issue? If so then *you are an enabler!* To fail to restore those overtaken in sin (Gal. 6:1) constitutes sin itself (Jas. 4:17). To try to correct the situation by any other way than by God's way of converting "the sinner from the error of his way" (Jas. 5:20) is to make a complete wreck out of the principles of brotherhood. (Read James 2:1,3;2,13-18;4:7.) Do you try to apologize for the critical brother by telling visitors, etc. that "that's the way he is," "he's getting senile in his old age," or "he's just a lefthanded screw"? Patience can only go so far. Then something needs to be done. To do nothing is to be an enabler!

The Solution To The Sin

Man's freedom from sin is conditioned upon knowing the truth and

continuing in it (Jn. 8:31-32). We must let the Word of Truth become our *dwelling* so that we can abide and continue in it. There will be two results of such action: (1) we will know the truth, (2) we will be made free. The *only thing* that will free us from the prejudice and hate, division and isolation, bitterness and hostility, abuses and selfishness, is the saving, working, living truth of God.

Truth is not simply something *known*, it is something to be done (Jn. 3:31). The knowledge and the experience of truth permits no compromise with evil, not even the appearance of it (1 Thess. 5:22), we cannot be an *enabler* and have proper regard for truth. Truth, if it is to be effective, has to be regarded in every respect: in belief, reverence, speech, action, etc. when truth produces this type of be-

havior in our lives then are we free from the bondages and impediments of life. Jesus is "the way, the truth" Jn. 14:6). He did not come to enable men to the furtherance of sin, but to save them. we cannot hope to see all men saved by the gospel until we confront them. Do not be an *enabler* by providing the means or occasion for the furtherance of their sinful cause.

"Without Possibility Of Parole"

By EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.

PAM Smart, for her part in the murder of her husband, was sentenced to life in prison "without possibility of parole". Her recent trial became almost a soap opera recorded by the national news media. As we followed the trial on the news and finally the verdict, we could not help but think what a waste of this attractive young school teacher's life. A young woman, younger than most of my children, now with noth-

ing to look forward to but a life in prison without possibility of parole — and justly so if the jury made no mistake in their judgment. What a tragedy?

As I pondered on her fate, I thought of that countless host all around us who are under a sentence for worse than Mrs. Smart's "without the possibility of parole" — once the sentence is executed on the Great Judgment Day. Every sinner is under the sentence of eternal death because the "wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). This death is not annihilation, but an eternity separated from God in Hell. It stands in contrast to the everlasting life given to the saved. Of course, by the mercy of God, a sinner can have this awful sentence lifted prior to his physical death and the judgement (Heb. 9:27) that follows by obedience to the gospel of Christ. (Heb. 5:8,9; 2 Thess. 1:5-9).

Once one dies in the lost state caused by sin, his destiny is sealed "without possibility of parole." As Abraham told the rich man in Hades, "there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us." (Lk. 16:26). What a awful sentence! Eternal hell without possibility of parole.

It will be be evelasting fire without possibility of parole. (Matt. 25:41).

It will be outer darkness where

there is weep and gnashing of teeth without possibility of parole. (Matt. 25:30).

It will be a lake of fire and brimstone without the possibility of parole. (Rev. 21:8).

It will be a place where "the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night" without possibility of parole (Rev 14:11).

It will be a condition far worse than physical death without possibility of parole. (Matt. 10:28; Heb. 10:29).

As awful and sure as this sentence is, it does not have to be executed. One can believe in the Christ, repent of his sin, confession his faith in Christ and be baptized in the name of Christ and be pardoned before dying and going to hell without the possibility of parole. (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:10; 1 Pet. 3:21). Even Mrs. Smart can do this and be saved from a sentence far worse than the one she has already receieved. So can you.

Joe Curry To Be Here This Summer

Brother Joe Curry has accepted our invitation to work with us this summer in the preaching of the gospel. He will begin around the first of June.

We are looking forward to working with him.

