



FIVE SINS TO MORTIFY BETWEEN NOW AND THE ELECTION

TO: LEGISLATORS

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Solomon has much to say to his son Rehoboam regarding governmental leadership. Teaching his son to recognize and avoid the most dangerous and tempting sins while in public service, the world’s wisest man states, “Righteousness exalts a nation [and] sin is a disgrace to it” (Proverbs 14:34).

Sin – both in the lives of governmental leaders and its citizens – is the greatest threat to the well-being of any nation. This truth is more important than any policy. After all, what value is good policy in the hands of sinful people? Ultimately, to the degree sin is eradicated, a culture prospers; and where sin proliferates, it most assuredly cripples a country.

Rampant sin shreds and unravels the fabric of a nation. Government, Wall Street, the Medical Industry, Transportation, the Food industry, to name but a few, need self-governed righteous leaders in order to function; laws and rules are of little effect if the hearts of leaders are inherently shady. This all seems so fundamental and obvious, but it can become a lesser priority during the hoopla of an election. What follows is Solomon’s short list of sins that short-circuit the life of a leader.

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PROVERBS: WHAT TO MORTIFY BEFORE THE ELECTION

I. INTRODUCTION

If it is true that “righteousness exalts a nation, [and] sin is a disgrace to it,” then the question quickly becomes one of how a leader or a nation most effectively eradicates sin? How can a political leader best infuse righteousness into him or herself, and more largely, how can they infuse righteousness into their culture? The answer to this question is critical to the long-term health of a nation.

One historic answer has been the formation of a police state. But no one wants to live in a police state (and it’s expensive too).

The other answer is a strong Church that is not tethered to the institution of Government. In this archetype, citizens are internally developed and weaned from sin via their individual, personal relationship with Jesus Christ in a composite, non-sacerdotal societal construct. Let me explain.

IN A COMPOSITE SOCIETY CHURCH AND STATE ARE SEPARATE INSTITUTIONS THAT ESTEEM ONE ANOTHER IN AND FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE GOD-ORDAINED POSITIONS AND PURPOSES

Herein is the genius of America and the First Amendment. In a sacerdotal state, on the other hand, the Church is tied to the State, and under the State’s authority. Historically, whenever the Church is subjugated to the authority of the State, the Church soon loses its biblical doctrine and effectiveness in terms of changing individual lives.

Thus, in order to promote righteousness in the people, a government must uphold and honor the autonomy of the Church. It is only independent-of-the-State, scripturally-driven pulpits in biblically-solid churches that forever breed righteousness in a citizenry. Our forebears demanded the First Amendment because they knew that this is the only approach that effectively maintains the quelling of

sin and the longevity of cultural sustainability. Without strong independent churches, sin will mushroom to levels of **disgrace**.

It is the indwelling and empowering Holy Spirit in our lives that germinates self-governance, stemming from the formation of our personal conviction of an omniscient God who will someday personally judge our behavior. Such an eternal perspective yields a present restraint. This is the Christian world view.

A culture is no better than the sum total of its individuals. To use a basketball parallel, I noticed early on that the coaches who spent time developing the individual skills of their players (versus a team coaching emphasis only) tended to field stronger squads than did the latter. So too, an emphasis on the growth of each individual’s character must be the highest priority in society, higher even than education and legislation, as important as those things are to the fabric of society.

Rather than wax on about what makes for a great nation (and perhaps receive high-fives from the audience reading this) what five sins does King Solomon repeatedly emphasize are most likely to derail you as a public servant? What sins are most apt to **disgrace** you?

II. A SHORT COURSE ON SIN

Before delving into those five specific temptations, it is important to refresh our biblical understanding of sin. The Scriptures are clear that even though man was created in God’s image, he is separated from God due to his sin. Most elementary Bible students know that sin entered the world in Genesis chapter 3 when Adam and Eve rebelled and disobeyed God’s only prohibition. The Greek word for **sin** is *hamartia* and it means “to miss the mark.” “All have sinned” states Romans 3:23. And sin leads to eternal separation from God, who in His absolute holiness and righteousness can have nothing whatsoever to do with it (cf. Rom. 6:23).



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Furthermore, because we are sinners, until each of us repents and receives Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord by faith alone, we remain in the state to which they were physically born: “dead in their trespasses and sin” (Eph. 2:1-4). In this life, one needs to make peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. This means people cannot think biblically nor be expected to perform righteous actions by their own doing (and when they seemingly do these things, it is out of prideful selfish motives versus God’s glory). To be dead in one’s sin is a strong biblical indictment as to the realities of the consequences of the Fall. Until one is regenerated in Christ he or she is, spiritually speaking, a walking corpse.

Finally, sin dominates the unsaved and they are addicted to its fruit. Galatians 5:19-21 lists these characteristics of sin:

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Note how the habitual presence of these characteristics will **disgrace** a nation. When the unregenerate overly influence a society, these fruits become its downfall. While the Scripture lists these as the general fruits of sin manifest in the lives of every unsaved individual, what follow are five of the most tempting ones that a political leader is most sure to face.

III. FIVE SINS THAT WILL LEAD TO YOUR DOWNFALL

A. THE DOWNFALL OF ADULTERY

5:22 His own iniquities will capture the wicked, And he will be held with the cords of his sin.

This Proverb is in the context of adultery. Solomon spends chapters and chapters warning about the leader’s need to guard against sexual fulfillment outside of wedlock. Here he is stating a sobering principle: When one gets caught up in the sensual appetite of illicit sexual fulfillment of any type beyond the measure of their spouse, he or she soon becomes locked in an immoral straitjacket that can forever rule his or her life. Nothing in the world can match the level of enticement and level of excitement than that of an illicit affair. Accordingly, all forms of sexual sin can be quickly habit forming and addictive. This sin has **cords** that can **hold** you to it. Proverbs 29:6 states,

By transgression an evil man is ensnared

Fleshly lust must be mortified and strictly barred by anyone who would lead. When the familial integrity of an individual is destroyed through infidelity, he or she will have nothing to offer the public—nor will they possess the stability necessary to maintain effective public service which stems from a solid home life. Long-term effective public service requires a stable home life. Remember too in this regard: Many a contentious woman is man-made (cf. Prov. 21:9, 19).

**ONCE SATAN CAN GET YOU TO
COMPROMISE ON YOUR MARRIAGE,
HE’S GOT YOU!**

Those who have tasted the power of office know that power is one of the strongest aphrodisiacs. It is proverbial that attractive members of the opposite sex throw themselves at elected officials, and this phenomenon is not limited to male legislators, But if you give in, it’s only a matter of time; sooner or later things will begin to crumble. **[You] will be held by the cords of [your] sin.** It’s not worth it! Why trade a long career for a



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moment's pleasure? With multiple days on the road during this election cycle, you will be bombarded with flattery, some of which will come from persons of the opposite sex who are drawn by the sexiness of your power. May these passing words of warning serve to fortify your heart; mortify this temptation, my friend! "Make straight paths for your feet..." states Hebrews 12:13.

B. THE DOWNFALL OF PRIDE

17:19 He who loves transgression loves strife; He who raises his door seeks destruction.

When Solomon writes **raises his door** he is employing a Hebrew idiom which connotes pride. To **raise your door** was the practice of building a home that was ostentatious with an ornate entry. The idea of the Proverb is that when one entertains pride he prepares the way for his **destruction**. In the Hebrew translation the subject and the verb can be interchanged so as to better understand the meaning: **He who loves strife loves transgression**. Proudful people tend to find delight in quarreling; because they are deluded into thinking they are always right. The problem however is that such proudful behavior leads to broken, **transgressed** relationships. A leader has enough legitimate problems with offending people because of the tough policy decisions he or she must make in office without offending people by the putrid aroma of personal arrogance.

**NOTHING ON THE HILL IS AS
AROMATICALLY UNPLEASURABLE
AS THAT WHICH SLITHERS OUT FROM
UNDERNEATH TOO MANY DOORWAYS:
THE STENCH OF SELF-IMPORTANCE**

Your pride can be your downfall. Proverbs 27:2 states powerfully a principle we should all memorize, meditate on and live by:

Let another praise you and not your own mouth, a stranger and not your own lips.

There is an old hymn titled, "How great Thou art." Keep in mind my friend that "Thou" is a reference to God. With all the attention that will be afforded you in the coming months, remember that you are only in office because of the grace of God. Mortify this temptation.

C. THE DOWNFALL OF POWER

22:8 He who sows iniquity will reap vanity, And the rod of his fury will perish.

The phrase **the rod of his fury** represents the evil a leader inflicts on another by his or her abuse of power. This interpretation is informed by the previous stanza of the Proverb: The Hebrew word for **iniquity** *avlah* as used here means "perversion, a twisting aside from the path of righteousness." When a leader **perverts** a process, procedure or a policy, when he or she bends the rules, the end will be **vanity** *aven*—a net loss of power.

Like a baby in want, power-hungry people are **furious** when their will is thwarted. This Proverb is talking about the brandishing (brandish: to exhibit or expose in an ostentatious, shameless, or aggressive manner) of power. And even though the wicked will sometimes prosper for a season—bullying their way through their abuse of power—generally and eventually their injustices will find them out. In our democratic system with its hawkish media this often happens sooner than later. Lastly, the Hebrew the word **perish** *kalah* means "to fail; to be destroyed." Your temptation to abuse whatever power you possess will ensure disappointment sooner or later. All of this is in apposition to the wise leader who bases their leadership in the concept of serving. They sow bountifully and reap bountifully (cf. 2Cor. 9:6), they give and it is given back (Luke 6:38), they humble themselves and are exalted (James 4:10). Taking advantage of your position, being all about yourself versus others, being power-hungry between now



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and the election will lead to your downfall. Mortify this temptation.

D. THE DOWNFALL OF ANGER

29:22 *An angry man stirs up strife, And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.*

In the Hebrew language the **angry man** spoken of here is literally “a man of nostrils” referring to a hot-tempered person who flexes his or her nose muscles during oft-recurring rages. While righteous indignation is an honorable characteristic (Eph. 4:26) when it comes to defending God’s honor, His explicit precepts, and fighting for justice, being given over to **anger** is indeed another matter: it is sin. Such fuming and gnashing of teeth will most assuredly cause **strife** (the state or condition of distrust or enmity: often bitter, sometimes violent conflict or dissension) within your marriage, family, staff, election staff, caucus or floor members.

Learn not to quarrel over trifles. There is no reason for so much **transgression** when scriptural principles are not the issue. Your ideas apart from scriptural truths are really not all that important or eternal in nature. Noble individuals often do disagree on things that are not scripturally clear-cut, so don’t be so arrogant as to think you are always right! In that **anger** stemming from selfishness could lead to your downfall, mortify this temptation.

E. THE DOWNFALL OF SLANDER

28:17 *A man who is laden with the guilt of human blood will be a fugitive until death; Let no one support him.*

Wherein this Proverb relates to not assisting a guilt-burdened murderer, it therefore seems almost totally non-applicable to the capital community. But keep in mind what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:21 and 22:

You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘you shall not commit murder. ...But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court...and whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the hell of fire.

The point is this: to slay someone in your heart or with your words is as evil in Jesus’ eyes as the outward shedding of blood! In full application of this Proverb, not only should you abstain from murdering others with your words, but you must shun those who are given to slandering others. **Let no one support** those who are given to a habit of repeated, false, disparaging comments about others. In line with the principles of Matthew 18:15-20, if you have a problem with another to “go to them privately” (and I might add here from personal experience, “quickly.”) These principles for dealing with the murderous sin of gossip and slander are especially important for leaders to observe and enact. When you slander another, you grant permission for those around you to do the same—to you! Remember the biblical principle, that, “a little leaven leavens a whole lump of dough” (Gal. 5:9). To change metaphors, you will soon reap what you have sown. Slander and gossip could lead to your downfall. Mortify this temptation.

IV. SUMMARY

Make sure these five sins do not creep up in your life, especially during the hoopla of the election wherein many will flatter you daily, which lowers your sobriety to reality, giving way to license and a casual attitude toward further sins. Flattery is false, insincere and excessive adulation. Since it is based in lying, to allow someone in your midst to lie to your face is in no way healthy for them or yourself!

MAY I SUGGEST THAT YOU BECOME PROACTIVE ABOUT FLATTERY: WHEN YOU SENSE IT, REPRIMAND ITS PURVEYOR STATING, “I WILL NOT TOLERATE FLATTERY!”

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This is a good principle to enact that will help you maintain objectivity and thereby lower to penetrability of the aforementioned temptations.

Beyond the election, continue to mortify these sins of the flesh and grow in righteousness!