

The Danger Of A False Accusation

Currently I am in an American Literature class in college and we have been discussing the Salem Witch Trials and an interesting point has been brought up in our class. There was a danger in this time period of being an "accused" witch. The point I want to draw on in our discussion is in their accusation process. In a movie for the class, a woman has been playing on the paranoia of the people of Salem by accusing people falsely. At this point in time if you were accused of these types of activities your chances of survival were slim. The point in the movie is that innocent people were going to suffer because of a false accusation. So, this makes me consider about how much damage a false accusation can cause. There are three things I want us to consider that a false accusation can bring upon the Lord's people.

First, it can damage a good reputation. Proverbs tells us that a good name or reputation is to be desired and held on to (22:1). Also, when a man is looking to meet the qualifications for an elder, he is one that must be "*blameless*" (1 Timothy 3:2). Consider the damage that can be done in a matter of moments over a false accusation. Say there is a man who has a good name among the community, and the local congregation, and he is outside cleaning streets. A member of the church who has an improper attitude sees this man with a beer can in his hand and his mind wonders. He then goes and tells others what he has just seen, thus slandering his good name (cf. 2 Timothy 3:3). Through this one false accusation this man's good name can be destroyed quickly. See how great a forest a little fire kindles (James 3:5). This man's reputation can be shattered in a matter of a few minutes all because of this false accusation.

Second, it will cause strife and even division among the Lord's body. Proverbs 6:19 says that "*he that soweth discord among brethren*" is something that God hates. Consider this situation: you hear from a fellow member of the congregation that brother Joe has a opinion that some people disagree on, and your fellow member says that Joe is trying to divide the church. This is heard by you, and it begins to cause strife among the congregation. Also, because of the carnality in the congregation, they never fully discuss the issue with Joe and get to the bottom of the story. The congregation eventually splits because of all the gossip and false accusations. There are more problems in this congregation that the fact of a false accusation, but if that person had gone in the beginning and talked to Joe and the situation had been dealt with properly, this division would have never occurred.

Third, it can contribute to someone losing their soul. Consider the situation we just discussed. What if because of all the strife, confusion, and division that is taking place, a young Christian throws his hands up in disgust and ceases to walk with the Lord. A popular excuse people give for why they fall short in coming to services is because people in the congregation are hypocrites. The people in this situation talked a big talk in regard to their service to the Lord, but then they divided and devoured one another on Sunday morning. Also, consider this situation. A young Christian has a false accusation put forth against them. They try to resolve the situation but the congregation has closed its mind to the discussion, and they push away an innocent man. This man then becomes angry and loses his faith because he was being torn apart by his own brethren.

My brethren, these things ought not to be so (James 3:10). We must consider the damage that can be done by one simple false accusation. Just as in Salem where these people would go and kill people on the basis of an accusation, we may withdraw fellowship or misrepresent someone because a false accusation. May we always strive to have an attitude that we will look into the situation ourselves instead of telling others, and to not have the receptive ear for such an accusation against one of our spiritual family (Leviticus 19:16).

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