

Msg #161 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

"Honest Bob"

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about honesty, and I'd like to start by telling about an experience I had the other day when I purchased a used car. Now, it was about time for a newer car because my old car had 224,000 miles on it, and although it still ran fine, I knew there was a limit to how long God was going to allow me to put it off.

Anyway, I found another car that looked like it would fit my needs, and bought it. However, when I got home I realized that the salesman had only given me one key to the car. In addition, the key fob, the gizmo which locks and unlocks the doors, was also missing. So I hopped on the phone and called the salesman back and explained that he had forgotten to give me both sets of keys. Well, I suppose you can guess what happened. The salesman told me that the previous owner had lost the one key, so that was all there was. I would just have to purchase another one, including the extra key fob. I explained to the salesman that he hadn't told me there was only one key, and that I thought it would have been good policy to have told me that before I purchased the car. Of course, as the old saying goes, let the buyer beware.

To sum it up in a nutshell, the salesman told me he could sell me a key and a key fob for \$77.00 plus tax, but in order to program the remote unlocking key fob, there would be another \$40.00 charge for labor for programming it. This put the cost of the key and key fob at \$107.00 plus tax. I took a minute to explain to the salesman that it was a bit disappointing to have to pay that amount, but he didn't seem to take the hint. It was just about this time that I became really disappointed, and Satan began to put thoughts into my head about what I might say to the

salesman. Specifically, it was thoughts of forcing the dealership to provide me a key and key fob because of false misrepresentation, etc., etc., and etc.

But at the same Ephesians 6:12 came to mind which says, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Many years ago I had learned that if you have to use force, then you’re fighting. This is when discussion turns into warfare. So, instead of arguing with the salesman I just thanked him for the information and hung up the phone. Then I said to myself, “Well, Lord, I guess that’s the way things are in this world. And they don’t know any better. I guess I’ll just have to go out and buy a key.”

You see, I didn’t want to wrestle against flesh and blood. All my Christian life I have tried to focus my warfare on spiritual things. I believe that if we fight against people, then we’ve lost the spiritual battle. I don’t know if you know what I mean, or not, but it’s really hard to testify of Jesus Christ to someone if at the same time you’re fighting them. When you are trying hard to force someone to do something that they don’t want to do, they’re not going to listen to your testimony of Jesus.

Oh sure, I know what I’m saying is not a popular doctrine, because in this current religious social system, the concept of standing up for your own rights is very popular. But Jesus didn’t stand up for himself. He always stood up for the Father in heaven, but not for himself. In fact, 1 Peter 2:19-21 tells us that it is a good thing if we suffer at the hands of others when we have done no wrong, because this glorifies God. It even tells us that it is for this reason that we have been called as sons of God.

Of course, it’s not fun to be treated wrongfully. But, on the other hand, if we are treated wrongfully and we react kindly to them instead of fighting against them, this is what gives glory to God. And certainly, the bottom line of any kind of Christianity is to give God glory. Without kindness to our enemies we can never please God. When we demonstrate kindness to those who abuse us, we are giving testimony of God’s unselfish love. It helps them to see God as a God of love. And what really happens when we react in kindness is that we demonstrate that God is more important to us than our own flesh. But when we go to extremes to protect our own flesh at the expense of our testimony of Jesus, then we have lost the spiritual battle and have succumbed to Satan’s temptation. Matthew 5:43-44 says, “You have heard that it has been said, that you shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

You see, if we want to love our enemies, we must refuse to fight them. You can’t punch someone in the nose and still say, “I love you,” without being a great big hypocrite. This means that you can’t demonstrate the love of God at the same time you are fighting against another person. In the Old Testament, there was an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. In the Old Testament the people who were under the Law of Commandments did fight against flesh and

blood. But Jesus made it clear that under the New Covenant of Grace, we also should be gracious to our enemies, just as God has shown graciousness to us.

So anyway, after I hung up the phone from talking to the salesman, I just put it into God's hands and decided I'd just have to go and buy another key. I couldn't afford to buy the key fob also, but I figured that my wife and I could probably get by with just one key fob. I'd let her have the remote entry key fob and I'd just use the key alone when I wanted to use the car, that way it wouldn't cost me as much.

But then, guess what happened next? The phone rang and it was the salesman again. He said, "Hey, you won't believe this, but I've got the key and key fob for your car right in my hand right now." I was surprised and puzzled at the same time. I said to the salesman, "How did this happen?" And he replied, "The old gentleman who traded in the car two weeks ago just walked into the showroom and placed the key and key fob in my hand, saying that he had been looking for them and had just run across them." Then he said, "What do you say to that?" And I replied, "I would say, 'Praise the Lord!'" And the salesman said, "Yeah, I would say that."

After expressing deep appreciation to the salesman I hung up and expressed my deep appreciation to God. You see, God had blessed me with a savings of \$107.00. And also, because I had not entered into warfare with the salesman or the dealership, I did not have to apologize to anyone. I had a good conscience, and didn't even have to apologize to God. It felt good all around.

You know, it's not easy to let someone else take advantage of you. It's our normal human fleshly response to take whatever steps necessary to protect our own flesh from harm in any way. But Jesus said in Mark 8:35, "For whoever desires to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." Also, in John 12:25 it says, "He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

You see, it isn't this life in this world that's important. In this world we live in flesh and blood bodies. The Bible tells us that flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God. And, if we try to protect ourselves at the expense of others, we will destroy the true life that we Christians have in the Spirit. In the same sense, if we take advantage of others at their expense, then we will some day stand before God and be held accountable for the lifeblood of that other person.

We all hate to be taken advantage of. We all hate to be, as the Bible says, "used despitefully." We don't like it when someone steals something from us or cheats us out of some of our money. But on the other hand, many times Christians fall into the trap of cheating other people out of their money. Let me give you an illustration of something that you may never have thought of before. This is a short dialog that I've put together. I call it, "Honest Bob." It takes a look at how some people take advantage of other people and think nothing of it.

Imagine that an elderly lady on social security pension has taken her car into Honest Bob's Automobile Repair Shop, and Honest Bob is not as honest as his title suggests. It goes like this.

"Sorry, Lady!" says Honest Bob, "but the muffler belt is shot. And you're also going to need new exhaust plug flanges, or the new belt won't last a month. I'll probably have to replace the carburetor pulley too, but seeing as how you're on social security and all that, I'll throw in a free thermostat for your alternator, and on top of that, I'll throw in a senior citizens 10% discount on all the parts."

"Oh, Honest Bob, you're very kind," replies the lady. "I can't thank you enough for helping me out."

"No problem!" says Bob. "Believe me, it's my pleasure."

Well, what did you think of Honest Bob? I know the illustration is a bit extreme, and a little silly, but it does show the concept of how the life of the poor is taken away. In scripture the life that is stolen away from people is represented by the term, blood. You've hear the term, lifeblood, haven't you? When someone takes away the lifeblood of someone it doesn't necessarily mean that they are causing that person to die, but it means that some of which makes up the life of the person is taken away. For example, if someone takes away your job, it is taking away the lifeblood of your existence. If someone takes away your money, it is taking away your lifeblood. The Bible says that the life of the body, meaning the fleshly physical body, is in the blood. It is the blood that gives the physical body life. Therefore, if someone is taking something of yours away, they are taking part of your life away. They are stealing part of you. Your life will not be as full because they are taking some of your lifeblood away.

Now, concerning the illustration I used of Honest Bob's Repair Shop, I don't know how familiar you are with cars, but for those who do, they know that there's no such things as muffler belts, carburetor pulleys, or alternator thermostats. Honest Bob is not helping the elderly lady at all. He is really helping himself to the elderly ladies skimpy bank account.

But, my question to you is this. How would you feel if the elderly lady in this illustration was your mother? How would you feel about Honest Bob? You wouldn't be very happy with him, would you? But then, do you think it's any different with God when someone takes advantage of one of his children? You know, it's easy to become angry at someone else when they treat us wrongfully, but have you ever taken advantage of someone else? No, of course not. You wouldn't do that, would you?

Well, let me give you another illustration. I call this one, The Garage Sale. It's about a woman who stops at a neighborhood sale, looking for a bargain. Listen to this.

"Harry! Look! There's another garage sale, you'd better stop the car. My heart is palpitating!"

"Oh, Ethyl, haven't you shopped enough for one day?"

“What Harry? Shopped enough? Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha ! It’s NEVER enough! A garage sale is the essence of life’s bargains. And you should be thankful I shop for the bargains. Harry, honestly, you’ve got to get with the program!”

A few minutes later we join Harry and Ethyl at the sale.

“Oh, Harry! Look at these lovely curtains. They are just the perfect color and pattern for the breakfast nook. And look, they’re like brand new. Ma’am? Ma’am? What will you take for these curtains?”

The proprietress of the sale replies, “Oh, aren’t they marked? I thought we had marked everything. Yes, here’s the tag. \$6.00.”

“Six dollars?” replies Ethyl. Oh no, I don’t think so. I think that’s a little too high.”

“But they’re almost new,” says the lady of the sale. “They were only hung for a short time. And the material was very expensive.”

“Oh really?” replies Ethyl. “But I just saw some similar material on sale at Wal-Mart, and it was quite reasonable. And besides, this pattern is going out of style. And then too I’ll have to have them professionally cleaned, and that will be an expense all its own. I’ll give you \$3.00 for them though. I have a place out of the way where I can make do with them.”

With a look of frustration the woman gives in to the offer. A little while later we pick up on Ethyl’s telephone conversation with a friend.

Oh Betty! You should see the new curtains I got at a garage sale. They’re like brand new. They look like they’ve never even been hung up. Looks like they were purchased and never used. They’re that pattern and color I’ve been looking all over for to fit the window in the breakfast nook. And they’re PERFECT! And you wouldn’t believe what I got ‘em for. Three bucks! Can you believe it? It was a real blessing from God.

So, have you ever found yourself in Ethyl’s place, taking from someone else’s life to add to the fulness of your own life? Now, I’m not suggesting that you have to pay more than what an item is worth, or that we can’t offer a reasonable price for something, but rather, that we should take the other person’s feelings into consideration as well as our own.

Here are some points to consider. First, the lack of trusting God for our provision shows our lack of contentment with what God has given us. You see, if you have to take away the lifeblood of another person in order to enhance your own life, then this shows that you are not happy with the way God is providing for you. In essence, you are really telling God that what he has given you is not enough, and that you aren’t pleased with the way he provides. Any time you need to take away from someone else in order to have enough for yourself, you are not being content with what God has given you. You are being selfish instead of thinking about the needs of others.

Also, we need to remember that God will give us everything we need if we will just seek to please him. God loves us, and it’s just like you and your children. If you love your children, you try to give them everything they need. You never withhold from them that which is good for them, but you only withhold from them that which may not be healthy. So when we use others to bring our increase, we demonstrate our lack of love for God. In fact, the scripture tells us that if

we do good or evil to one of God's children, it is the same thing as if we have done it unto God. In essence, if we are robbing the lifeblood from others, we are actually trying to rob the lifeblood from God. We are crucifying Christ when we try to take the lifeblood away from his children, because they are the body of Christ, or may become the body of Christ. Either way, it is a dangerous thing to take away someone's lifeblood just to make sure you have a better lifestyle.

Now, you may not have ever thought about garage sales in this way before, but if you see something at a garage sale that you like, then you have established that it has value. If you tell someone that what they have is not valuable just so you can benefit from it, then what you are doing is lying to them in order to take away their life and make it your own. When you lie, you are placing yourself in the position of being a child of Satan. Satan is a liar, and all his children are also liars. Here's the bottom line. If you hate it when someone takes advantage of you, then you should also hate to take advantage of someone else.

Now, I'd like to leave you with a challenge. The next time you're buying something from someone, whether it's at a garage sale, or buying a used car, or whatever, if the value of the item is truly more than the price they are asking, why don't you try offering them more instead of less. Just once, try adding lifeblood to the other person's life instead of trying to take it away. In this way, you will be demonstrating the principle of loving your neighbor as yourself, something that hardly anybody every really does anymore. But if you voluntarily give up extra, just for the sake of another person, don't you think that maybe this could really make a significant spiritual impact on them? Wouldn't it be a good witness of Jesus Christ to demonstrate giving life instead of taking it?

1 Corinthians 10:24 says, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." It means that our emphasis should be on the needs of others rather than on our own needs. If you're at a garage sale, and something is priced at \$6.00, and you know in your heart that the item is worth more than that, wouldn't the people be surprised if you offered them \$10.00 for it? Maybe, - - just maybe, - - it would be an opportunity to let your light shine for Jesus?