

Reputed by Evangel
Reputed Eternity - 12/12/70

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God Does Not Withhold the Living Water
WHEN THE PREACHER SINS

Sue stared at the newspaper. Incredible! No one wanted to talk about it, yet everyone was talking. How could it be? He was so likeable. He had seemed so spiritual. In the communities where he had ministered tongues were wagging: this was just another proof that Christianity didn't amount to anything. It was a f ake and preachers were no more than charlatans out for the money in it.

The trouble was that it wasn't just gossip or a rumor. He was openly in the news. By his own admission he had been guilty of misconduct for several years. Reportedly he was even saying that it didn't matter to God because souls had been saved.

How could souls be saved under the ministry of a man with hidden sin? There were all those good meetings. Were the new converts really saved? Sue's own brother had been converted, and a young neighbor had been freed from the drug habit when he accepted Christ as Savior. Sue was sure that her brother had been truly saved. The faith of some was so undermined that they vowed to have no more to do with "such a racket." Others were doubtful and perplexed.

Doesn't God know what's going on? Why does He let a man go on preaching?

The children of Israel had been wandering under the blazing

desert sun for a long while. The animals were lowing with thirst, the children crying and whining for water, parents were distraught with anxiety and fear for themselves and their children. God commanded Moses to speak to the rock, with the promise of water.

But Moses did not speak to it. Their complaining lack of faith in the God Who had so tenderly cared for them exasperated the usually meek Moses. "You rebels!" he cried angrily, and in wrath and disobedience he hit the rock twice.

The dilemma again. Could God bless disobedience by giving water? Wouldn't that mean He was winking at disobedience? But here lies the heart of it all: GOD DID NOT WITHHOLD THE WATER FROM THE THIRSTY PEOPLE. Moses' sin did not erase their need. God would not punish Moses by withholding from them. He would deal individually with Moses, but He had committed the honor of His Name to caring for those complainers whom He had delivered from Egypt.

The preacher was proclaiming Jesus as Savior, the Cross as the payment for sin, and the Resurrection as the only hope of salvation. The people who heard were dying in their sins, they were thirsting for the Living Water. Could God withhold His Life-giving Water from them to punish the unfaithful messenger?

How much better to have a faithful servant! But He has committed the honor of His Name to fulfilling the Word He has given. He calls all men everywhere to repent and has made the Name of Jesus the only Name under heaven whereby men must be saved. Should fifty or a hundred souls be sent to hell to prove that God knows a man's hidden sins? Saving them is no indication

that He will not judge the messenger; it means that He will honor His Word wherever men will accept it.

Salvation is as sure as the Word of God. ^{God honors His message, not the messenger.} Though the servant ^{and will certainly be judged,} fail, God will not withhold the Living Water from the ^{quenching} thirsty people. "God so loved the world...and sent His son...and whoever believes on Him will be saved." (John 3:16)

