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TAX-EXEMPT

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” MARK 16:15

November 2023

FROM US TO YOU

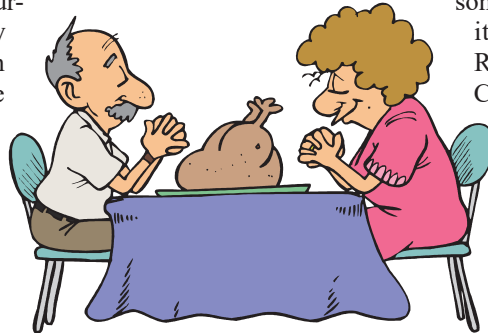
Things were looking good. Great tidings were in the air! Bret Baier, news anchorman for the FOX television network went to interview Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia. During the interview, the prince indicated that he would welcome peaceful relations with Israel. Israel’s Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu was delighted with the news and both of them eagerly awaited an improved future rapport. However, as the Bible says, “*While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape*” (1 Thessalonians 5:3 NIV). Satan, who runs this world system (Ephesians 2:1-2), doesn’t want peace. He wants war, misery and bloodshed. Likewise, those whom he influences have his sadistic, warlike traits (Galatians 5:17-21). Jesus said of them, “*You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies*” (John 8:44 NIV). On October 7, 2023, any hope of imminent peace was shattered. Many innocent Jewish families living in western Israel were brutally tortured and murdered by Hamas terrorists while they peacefully ate breakfast. Babies were beheaded, women were raped in the street, and some Jews were burned alive. Many hostages were taken. There was blood everywhere!

Deep hatred, such as that which inspires such actions, does not come from God. For our God is the epitome of love (1 John 4:8), compassion and kindness. “*...The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...*” (Galatians 5:22-23 NIV). However, the Lord is also a God of justice, especially for the weak and vulnerable who cannot defend themselves. The Bible says, “*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head*” (Romans 12:18-20 KJV). Yet there comes a point when endless compassion and kindness just encourages greater evil. There has to be a deterrent, a consequence to discourage crime and bad behavior.

In Old Testament times, tiny Israel, like today, was greatly outnumbered by her enemies. Nevertheless, she frequently won battles against her strongest of foes. So what was her secret? It was her relationship with God. When Israel followed God, she won her battles and defeated her enemies. The story of David and Goliath is an example of that (1 Samuel 17:1-53). When Israel sinned against God, she was defeated. Israel is no longer living for God. Most Jewish people have rejected their own Messiah, Jesus Christ. Isaiah prophesied His rejection. He wrote about the prophesied Messiah, “*He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces He was*

despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:3-6 NIV).

Here, in America, this is the month of Thanksgiving. It is a time we set aside every year to thank God for all the good things He has given us, and for the great harvest that has come into our country. So when you enjoy all the bounty God has given you, let it be a true day of thanksgiving of your heart, not just “turkey day” as some ingrates have said. Take the day seriously, and thank God for all that He has done. Even those who have suffered financially must have something for which to be grateful. What blessings do you take for granted? Do you thank God for your good health, good weather, family, friends, happy marriage, free country, good food, nice career? Don’t even some of these things apply to you? Pollyanna had it right. Do not take your blessings for granted. Remember even the basic things God has done. Consider how precarious life can be. Something could happen at any moment to destroy all you have. It happened to the Israeli settlers of western Israel. You can be alive one minute and dead the next.



The revelers at a music festival in Israel thought they were having great fun before the terrorists came and tragedy struck. It was the terrorists first stop on their murderous rampage. So don’t be “*...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*” (2 Timothy 3:4 NIV). Where would you like to be when death is near, and you are soon to meet God (Galatians 6:7)? Many churches are so far out of the light of Christ (John 8:12) that they have become little more than religious social clubs. Remember what Jesus said. If you’re a Christian, He is your true Vine. “*Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned*” (John 15:4-6 NIV). Pray for Israel. She gave us our Savior! And enjoy your Thanksgiving everyone.

Remember what Jesus said, “*Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*” (Revelation 3:19-22 NIV).

In the Lord’s service, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*

The Wrong Kind of Love

By Anne Kaestner

You hear it in love songs. You see it in movies. You read it in magazines and paperback novels. It's all around us; that desire to have a special, sometimes secret, romance with somebody who makes your heart pound, and your pulse rise. Probably the most famous and classic of these romances is Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet." Although it ended in such tragedy, to earthly society, even the death of two young people is somehow appealing to the senses. Since the play was originally made public, gullible, lonely humans have equated death with beauty and romance. That is not God's way. Jesus said, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep'"* (John 10:10-11 NIV).

Years ago I read something that the late actress Zsa Zsa Gabor once said. She was talking about one of her many husbands, George Sanders (1906-1972), who was also an actor. Her marriage to Sanders lasted only five years from 1949 to 1954. She said that on their wedding night, Sanders had said to her, "I can never make love to you again." The inference seemed to be that being married didn't excite him. There was no challenge anymore. George Sanders eventually committed suicide. He apparently left a note that read, "Dear World. I am leaving because I am bored. I feel I have lived long enough. I am leaving you with your worries in this sweet cesspool. Good luck." So sad, and such a wasted life. However, it is the wages of those who attempt to drain all the pleasure that is left out of this life by breaking all the rules, and finding nothing left.

The Bible says, *"...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death"* (James 1:14-15 NIV). Oh, but the temptations are there alright. Those who are unsaved are easy pickings for our invisible enemies, Satan and his demons. But dedicated Christians are more of a challenge. Nevertheless, the devil and his demons never give up. They will keep trying to separate you from Christ, the only hope you have of eternal salvation. Temptation is something that happens to everyone. It is not a sin to be tempted, only to yield to temptation. There is nobody who can't be tempted. Even Jesus was tempted. *"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin"* (Hebrews 4:14-15 NIV).

So how do the temptations come? They come through Satan, who is the evil ruler of this world, and through fallen angels (Revelation 12:9) who became demons. If you're a true Christian, they once controlled the way *"in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath"* (Ephesians 2:2-3 NIV). They tempt humans by appealing to our senses, and the things we humans crave. That's why the Bible warns us, *"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his*

eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:15-17 NIV).

So sin comes through our emotions. How many times have you done something that your brain told you not to do? But your lust won over, and you did it anyway. You knew that there would be consequences. And there were. Afterward you wished you hadn't done it, but it's too late now. At the time you couldn't resist it. Your body craved for two more slices of that chocolate cake. So you ate them, and you gained the weight. Or maybe it was something more serious than that. Sin comes through your senses. The lust of your eyes. You know you shouldn't have looked at that pornography. Now it's become addicting. Ted Bundy said it is what led him to commit many murders. He died in Florida's electric chair. And sin comes through pride. The boasting of what you have and don't have. You know you shouldn't have lied on that job application. Now you find yourself telling more lies to cover up for the first one. You gave into temptation, and now you feel that obstacle of guilt getting in the way of your walk with God. And that was the idea. Satan won. And now you don't feel the closeness with Christ you once did.

It is your embarrassment that makes you too ashamed to pray and ask for God's forgiveness. You think that God is angry with you. He's not angry, just disappointed. The Lord knows the

devil has trapped you, and He wants to wash all the filth out of you. But first, you have to come to Him and repent. God doesn't want you wandering off like a lost sheep from the fold. He cares enough to make all the rest of His sheep safe while He goes out looking for you (Luke 15:4-7). It's the devil who will point his finger at you and tell God you don't really love Him. That you have an ulterior motive for claiming that you do. He did that with Job. *"Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.' 'Does Job fear God for nothing?' Satan replied. 'Have You not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out*

Your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face" (Job 1:8-11 NIV).

God wants to be loved. Before mankind was created, God lost one third of His angels, called stars (Revelation 12:4). They rebelled against Him and sided with Satan. After mankind was created, the Lord was devastated about the sin and corruption that humans had caused. *"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and His heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them.' But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD"* (Genesis 6:5-8 NIV). One man saved the world from destruction. One man loved God enough to save mankind! What a difference one man can make when he loves God enough!

So you may be thinking that since Job was righteous and Noah was too, they were easy for God to love. Perhaps you have done something that you're so ashamed of that you think God won't forgive you. *"On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a*



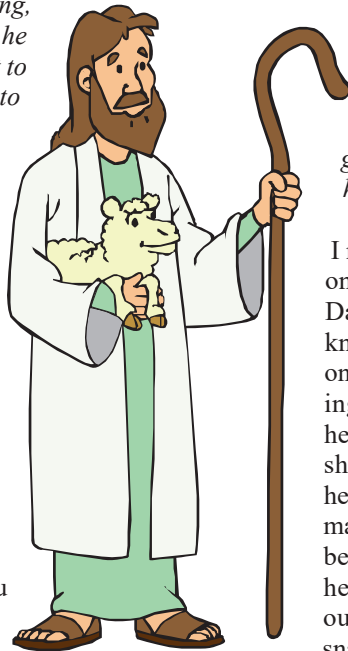
doctor, but the sick... For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners'" (Matthew 9:12-13 NIV). That little lost lamb Jesus came to rescue can't save himself (Isaiah 53:6). His coat is stuck in the thorns. And there's a wolf hiding in the bushes that sees the helpless little lamb. He is licking his lips and thinking about dinner (Matthew 7:15-16). Are you feeling like that little lost lamb? Wouldn't you like to come home again, back to the safety of the fold? No matter what you hear elsewhere, you don't need to get any other individual involved. This is personal. It's just between God and you. Your Good Shepherd is out there looking for you. Just look up at Jesus and admit what a fool you've been. Just tell Him you can't do it alone. You need Him so badly! He loves you so much, your Good Shepherd spilt His own blood trying to rescue you. That wolf can look elsewhere for his dinner. You're coming to Jesus and this time the devil is the loser. You just didn't know how very much God really loves you!

In order to describe how strong God's love is for us, Jesus told this parable. "...There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything" (Luke 15:11-16 NIV). This describes a similar situation many immature Christians find themselves in today. When they're faithful to God, everything seems to go smoothly. Then they get bored with the status quo and want more excitement. That's when their heart becomes a fertile soil for temptation.

Then they hear about the interesting things other people do. By comparison, their life seems so devoid of excitement. However, the examples that they hear about go the extra mile. There is an element of danger there. The devil whispers in their ear, "look what you're missing out on. Go that extra mile while you still can. Before anyone stops you." Then one day you realize it's too late. You thought you could get away with strolling a bit from the sheepfold. But now you can't find your way back. And, to survive, you end up doing things you never thought you would do. The young son in the parable felt trapped. He didn't feel worthy of returning to his father. He finally realized how to go home, but only as a servant.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate" (Luke 15:17-24 NIV).

The father in this parable symbolizes the love of God. "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels



of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10 NIV). This brings to mind a story about a woman named Mary Magdalene. She had lived an evil life. Not only had she been a prostitute, but Jesus had cast seven demons out of her (Mark 16:9). Consequently, Mary became a follower of Jesus and had a special love for Him. Jesus knew about Mary's background, and the derogation He had delivered her from, but He always defended her (Luke 10:39-42). Here's an example. "When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, He would know who is touching Him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.' Jesus answered him, 'Simon, I have something to tell you.' 'Tell me, teacher,' he said. 'Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?' Simon replied, 'I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.' 'You have judged correctly,' Jesus said. Then He turned toward the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give Me any water for My feet, but she wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give Me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing My feet'" (Luke 7:37-45 NIV).

This brings to mind a memory from my childhood. I must have been about eight or nine years old. I was on a New York City subway with my parents when my Dad saw the cover of a newspaper. He told us that he knew the woman photographed in the picture. She was on a dock near the water. She looked a wreck! Her stockings were loose, her clothes were wet and messy, and her hair looked awful. My Dad said that, at one time, she was a strong Christian woman. She used to carry her Bible around with her. Then she fell in love with a married man. The relationship must have been a disaster because she tried to kill herself. The police had saved her life, and somehow the newspaper reporters found out about it. She sat on the pier looking pitiful as they snapped away with their cameras. Satan had led her to the brink of hell, but God didn't let her die. I don't know what happened after that, but hopefully, she repented and returned to the Lord. Suicide is a quick trip to Hell (Mark 9:47-49), because you're still controlling your life, instead of giving it to God.

Just before my husband and I began this ministry, in the late nineteen eighties, there was a major scandal involving the leader of a huge Christian ministry. We had just attended a crusade he had held on Long Island just three months earlier. I remember a remark that the evangelist had made at the crusade. He said "Sin will make a fool of you. And it is so selfish!" Apparently it was a self-fulfilling prophecy. The evangelist was so well known everyone had heard of him. It was later revealed that he had hired the services of a prostitute. All the major networks covered the event. It was their lead story. Many Christians were shaken and discouraged by it. Many of his supporters left him, including us. He is still on television these days, but his ministry is small compared to what it once was. His name is Jimmy Swaggart.

The Bible tells us about a cherished servant of God named David. The Lord brought him through many difficult experiences. You can read about David's fears and anxieties in many of the Psalms he wrote. But David was a man of strong (Continued on Page 4)

faith, and he loved the Lord. It was he who, with God's help, killed the giant Goliath, that all the other men of Israel with afraid to fight (see 1 Samuel 17:4-51). However, there eventually came a time of peace and blessings. And David was made king of Israel (1 Samuel 28:17, 2 Samuel 2:4). David had many wives, concubines, and slaves. Yet, as often happens during times of peace, prosperity and blessings, David began to take his relationship with God for granted. And, probably without realizing it, he became somewhat blasé about it. "One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, 'Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?' Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, 'I am pregnant' (2 Samuel 11:2-6 NIV).

Oh, what a mess David had gotten himself into! She was the wife of another man. David knew that if it was discovered that Bathsheba had committed adultery, even with the king, it could cost her her life. So she was in great danger. However, David had fallen deeply in love with her. So he tried to cover it up by bringing Uriah home from the battle so that he would sleep with his own wife and think that the baby would be his. "So David sent this word to Joab: 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.' And Joab sent him to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, 'Go down to your house and wash your feet.' So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him" (2 Samuel 11:6-8 NIV). However, David's plan backfired on him. Because, "...Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house. When David was told, 'Uriah did not go home,' he asked him, 'Haven't you just come from a distance? Why didn't you go home?' Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!'" (2 Samuel 11:9-11 NIV).

Uriah was an honorable man. But he was putting his own life in danger that way because Bathsheba wasn't getting any less pregnant, and eventually it would be obvious. Sin can put you in an untenable position. Time was running out. In despair, David tried a different approach. "At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home" (2 Samuel 11:13 NIV). This must have been very frustrating for Bathsheba too. She was a young beautiful woman. She must have been very lonely married to Uriah. David was feeling the pressure. He had to do something. And by then he was almost out of options. There was only one way out. Yet David felt he had no choice if he was going to keep Bathsheba safe. So David wrote another letter to Joab, his general. "In it he wrote, 'Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.' So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died" (2 Samuel 11:15-17 NIV). Joab sent word to David about what happened, and that Uriah was dead. "David told the messenger,

'Say this to Joab: 'Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.' Say this to encourage Joab.' When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD" (2 Samuel 11:25-27 NIV).

David had drifted so far away from the light of God (see John 8:12) that he had taken a cavalier attitude toward Uriah's death, probably in order to block out his own guilt. However, there was a prophet named Nathan. "The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, 'There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.'

David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, 'As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.' Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul'" (2 Samuel 12:1-7 NIV).

It's sometimes easier to see the sin in others than ourselves. God used Nathan to hit the target, so to speak, and David saw himself through God's eyes, and he no longer rationalized it away. Suddenly he felt the sharp pang of shame. Then God's message through Nathan continued. "I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in His eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised Me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own. This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.' Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' Nathan replied, 'The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.' After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill. David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground" (2 Samuel 12:8-16 NIV). The baby died, another casualty of David's sin. So much for those who say that whatever two consulting adults do together is nobody else's business. Families often break up over adultery or worse sins these days. You may think that nobody sees you. But God sees it all (1 Samuel 2:3 and Psalm 44:21)! "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7 KJV).

