

Holding the Coats of Sinners

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. "The greatest evil is not now done in those sordid 'dens of crime' that Dickens loved to paint. It is not done even in concentration camps and labor camps. In those we see its final result. But it is conceived and ordered (moved, seconded, carried, and minuted) in clean, carpeted, warmed, and well-lighted offices, by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voice." (C.S. Lewis)

I. WE DO NOT NEED TO ENGAGE IN THE SIN TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SIN

- A. If we approve of either the sin or the sinner, we become accountable.
 - 1. Prov. 18:5; Psalm 82:2; Deut. 1:17
- B. Holding coats began as an actual role in a vigilante execution, but over time it became a metaphor for endorsing outlandish sins without engaging in them personally - Acts 7:58, 22:20
 - 1. The outer garments would have been heavy and constricting, so it would have been sensible to remove them in order to stone Stephen. These garments would have also been valuable, so it would be important that someone would be assigned the task of protecting them from thieves.
 - 2. Saul never threw a stone, yet he was guilty of killing Stephen. He approved of what the others were doing and showed it by helping.
- C. We don't have to engage in a sin to become accountable for that sin. Direct involvement is not necessary.
 - 1. By expressing approval of those who are sinning - Rom. 1:29-32
 - 2. By minimizing sin or its effects - Isa. 5:20-21
 - 3. By praising the wicked - Prov. 28:4, 17:15; Psalm 10:3
 - 4. By declaring sinners acceptable to the Lord - Mal. 2:17; Prov. 24:24
- D. If we endorse sinners or approve of or casually dismiss the sins they commit, we share in those sins and are accountable before God for them.

II. WE DO NOT NEED TO COMMIT THE SIN TO BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR TEACHING OTHERS TO SIN

- A. 2Sam. 13:1-20 - In the account of Amnon's assault on Tamar, most overlook Jonadab who suggested the scheme to Amnon.
- B. Num. 22-24 - In the account of Balaam and Balak, Balaam recommended a means of getting God to condemn the Israelites by leading them into sin.
 - 1. Num. 31:16; 2Peter 2:15
- C. Jesus addressed this problem
 - 1. Matt. 18:6 - Causing the innocent to sin
 - 2. Matt. 23:15 - Pharisees making proselytes

III. WE CAN PARTAKE IN ANOTHER'S SIN BY KEEPING SILENT ABOUT THE SIN

A. 2Kings 7:3-9

1. "If I were to remain silent, I'd be guilty of complicity." (Albert Einstein)

B. Silence is not a substitute for soundness

1. 2John 9-11 - We cannot be silent around a false teacher.
2. Eph. 5:11 - We cannot quietly coexist with the works of darkness
3. Eph. 5:6-7; 1Tim. 5:22 - We cannot compromise with another's sin

C. "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

1. "It may well be that we will have to repent in this generation. Not merely for the vitriolic words and the violent actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around and say, 'Wait for a time.'" (Martin Luther King Jr.)