

Accusing voices

As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one.” St. Paul

Have you ever been falsely accused of doing something you did not do? A joke involving this problem was about a man who was having this challenge surface in his dreams when he went to sleep. He would hear these accusing voices in his head all the time. So he went to the doctor. The psychiatrist said “How does this make you feel to be falsely accused all the time?”

“Terrible!” the man said “It is so bad doctor, I need your help in a big way. What should I do? I feel very suicidal...”

The doctor replied, “Well, before we go any further, you must pay me in advance!” ☺

I was watching an old video on the British made for television show, *Upstairs Downstairs*, which is set in the early part of the last century when the upper classes lived above and the servants below. In this episode the upstairs family had engaged a new servant girl who soon became unhappy and that unhappiness came to the notice of the master of the house. In sympathy with her, he finally got out of her that she was pregnant and after much duress he got her to admit the name of the man who was the father of the child.

The Master confronted that man and of course the man denied it and then sued the master for falsely accusing him of being the father. (In those days there were no paternity tests available.)

The Master went to his solicitor who advised him that he had been most unwise and he advised the Master to get the girl to sign a statement that she had lied about it. After much agonized thought, the master did so, due to possible loss of reputation and family considerations. Although he was blameless, the accusations and the publicity would probably sink his career. If he defended the servant girl, he would be accused of more than a casual interest in the girl, for she was a servant, and why would he care about her

unless there was something else going on? All things considered, including the context, did the master do the right thing?

According to the law offices of Aaron Larsen:

“The publicity that results from a defamation lawsuit can create a greater audience for the false statements than they previously enjoyed. If the media pick up the story of the lawsuit, false accusations that were previously known to only a small number of people may suddenly become known to the entire community, nation, or even to the world. As the media is much more apt to cover a lawsuit than to cover its ultimate resolution, the net effect may be that large numbers of people hear the false allegations, but never learn how the litigation was resolved. In other words, the plaintiff may be required to expend a considerable amount of money to bring the action, may experience significant negative publicity which repeats the false accusations, and if unsuccessful in the litigation may cement into the public consciousness the belief that the defamatory accusations were true.”

Frequently malicious people who accuse others of wrongdoing know that all they have to do is make the allegations and accusations and that will be enough, whether they are true or not does not matter all that much- the damage to the person's reputation will be done anyway... A public defender friend of mine once said to me; “I used to say, when I heard that someone was charged with a crime, that they must be guilty. I have learned,” she said, “to ask now ‘what are the facts?’”

This problem of being accused is no new problem. In ancient Israel, in one of the oldest books of the Bible- the Book of Job, the problems associated with accusations are personified in a dark spiritual presence called the Satan. The Satan is seen as the accuser in Judaism, Islam and Christianity. In the New Testament he is

called the “Accuser of the brethren.” His prime weapon is discouragement, used to achieve a sense of guilt. I had a grandmother who used to say “ All discouragement comes from the Devil!”

But let’s notice this, **nowhere in any spiritual tradition is accusation seen as the work of God.** Rather, God is frequently seen as the one who vindicates against false accusations, as in Isaiah 57: 17 “No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD.

When St Paul was on trial for his life, he was falsely accused by Alexander the coppersmith and this is what he said about that: “Alexander the Copper Smith did me a great deal of harm...he violently opposed everything I said...at my first hearing no one came into court to support me...but the Lord stood by me and leant me strength.”

The book of Ezra states that the rebuilding of Jerusalem was stopped by accusations made to Artaxerxes. The book of Daniel says that accusations were made against Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego and they were thrown into the fiery furnace because of them.

Five accusations were made against Christ for

- 1) Violating the sabbath, 2) threatening to destroy the Jewish temple 3) Sorcery exorcising demons 4) claiming to be the messiah 5) claiming to be the King of the Jews.

And Jesus remained silent most of the time, knowing that no matter what was said, it would be used against him anyway.

But you say to me what about your story of the servant girl? What do we do, when more damage will be done by just trying to defend

ourselves or others who are falsely accused? What then? Do we do nothing?

Sometimes doing nothing, is all we can do. But that, thank God, is not the end of it!

There are two sayings which reflect a spiritual reality about this problem of false accusations. We say, referring to this reality “What goes around comes around” and what that means to us is that the accuser creates bad Karma for themselves by their actions. The Bible says “Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap.” Spread a falsehood and it will come back to bite you!

There is another saying as well: “The truth will out.” It may take some time, but count on it, if given even half a chance the truth will slip out somewhere and change everything. In history, the truth eventually shines out. Alexander the Copper Smith has been almost entirely forgotten except as an example of someone who falsely accused a great man. St Paul will always be remembered as one of the world’s greats and Alexander the Copper Smith as a man of no consequence.

But what if we have done something wrong and a voice within **us** accuses us continually of it? We might have done all we can to make restitution. We may have been completely forgiven but that does not seem to matter to this voice within. We accuse ourselves and often hold ourselves to a higher standard than we do others.

This can be on everyday levels as well. For the most minor offences we often have difficulty forgiving ourselves. We tell ourselves that our work is poor and we should have done it better. If we are parents, we can castigate ourselves for being too soft or too hard on our children. Perhaps we chewed out an employee for some infraction and now feel bad about it. Perhaps we have a habit or addiction that we just can’t break and we tell ourselves that we

are a failure. Whether we attribute this voice to our lower nature or the Satan doesn't much matter, because we are still defeated all the same.

What do we need to do about this?

1) Stop listening to this accusing voice within us by understanding that God is our Shield and defender. not our accuser!

2) Let's change the frequency to positive and start to use affirmations! If we have made mistakes, the Bible, in many places, makes it clear that there is a way back to God through repentance and forgiveness.

3) Ask God to forgive us. And if we have, have we then accepted that forgiveness, taken it into our souls and found peace? If we haven't and are still very critical towards ourselves, we are also most likely to be very critical of others as well. In fact without realizing it we can get into the accuser role. Its called transfer!

There is however a whole other way to go forward:

Jesus taught us not to judge. "Judge not that thou be not judged" he said. We are not to judge **ourselves or other people**. If God, Our Creator does not stand in the accuser's box, why are we there? It does us absolutely no good to put ourselves down or to condemn others. Fixing blame is always useless. Fix the problem instead.

We all know that in our heart of hearts, that God does not give up on us, don't we? All of us are works in progress. We're allowed to make mistakes, learn from them, forgive ourselves and move forward in spiritual growth. This is a process. **But there is no need to get stuck living condemned, in the process of becoming a better person!**

The Bible says that God is merciful. Jesus said that “God brings his rain on the just and the unjust alike.” God accepts us the way we are, as the old hymn says **Just as I am, I come.** With God we can become more of who we **really** are. God made us and knows everything about us, and so we cannot surprise God. God knows our strengths and weaknesses and we are here on this planet to make our souls. **It’s the journey that is important**, not just the destination and if we believe in ourselves, in God and in each other, we can empower ourselves, to become better people and more effective for the cause of goodness in the world. If we forgive ourselves, then we must also make a decision to stop listening to the accusing voices within. The moment we do, we can release abundant energy that has previously been wasted and experience a new freedom!

Here is how it can work!

One day as Gandhi stepped aboard a train, one of his shoes slipped off and fell between the tracks as the train moved off. Instead of accusing himself as being a careless fool, Gandhi simply took off his other shoe and threw it as close as he could to the other. Asked why he did this he said: “The poor man who finds a shoe lying between the tracks will now have a pair he can use.”

When Jesus had a woman brought before him accused of adultery and her accusers pressed the accusations against her, Jesus remained silent. Finally pressed for an answer he said: “Let the person without sin, cast the first stone.” The crowd melted away until it was only the woman who was left standing there. And Jesus said to her: “Where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.” And she walked away free... the accusations died, because as St. Paul says no one of us is in a position to condemn! When we condemn others, it is the pot calling the kettle black, or the leper condemning a fellow leper, for being leprous.

I close now with a very important story about a woman who dropped from her mind the accuser role that Jesus asked us to do when he told us all *never to condemn or judge another person*.

If anyone is connected to the prison system, they will tell you that the easiest thing in the world to do is to play the role of the accuser. When someone is in jail it is all too easy to think they are guilty and treat them that way. It is very, very hard not to be judgmental with people who are in prison. After all they have been condemned by society!

But...

Some few who are connected with prisons amazingly do not go into judgment but instead care for the inmates. Let me tell you of one such person who refused to condemn people in prison and insisted in treating them with respect.

Catherine Laws was a young mother of three small children when her husband became warden of Sing Sing prison. Everyone warned her from the beginning that she should never set foot within the prison walls, but that did not stop Catherine! When the first prison basketball game was held, she walked into the gym with her three beautiful children and sat in the stands with the inmates. Her attitude was 'My husband and I are going to take care of these men and I believe that they will take care of me! I don't have to worry!'

She insisted on getting acquainted with them and their records. She discovered that one convicted murderer was blind so she insisted on visiting him. Holding his hand in hers she said; "Do you read Braille?"

"What's Braille?" he said. She taught him how to read and years later he would weep tears of love for her.

She found a deaf mute in prison. She went to school to learn sign language so that she could communicate with him. Many said that *Catherine Lawes was the body of Jesus that came alive again in Sing Sing prison.*

Catherine was killed in a car accident. The next morning Warden Lewis Lawes did not come in to work so the acting warden took his place. Instantly the inmates knew something was up. Something was terribly wrong. Gradually the word leaked out that Catherine was dead.

The following day, her body was resting in a casket in her home, three quarters of a mile from the prison gates. As the acting warden took his early morning walk, he was shocked to see a large crowd of the toughest, hardest looking criminals gathered like a restless herd at the main gate. As he approached however, he noticed tears of grief and sadness. He knew how much these men loved Catherine. He turned and faced the men and said: "All right men, you can go and pay your respects. Just be sure that you check back in tonight." He then opened the gates and a parade of criminals walked out without a guard, trudging in an orderly file the three quarters of a mile, to stand in line to pay their final respects to Catherine Lawes. At nightfall they were all checked back in, every last one of them!

If we drop the accuser's role, if we stop listening to the voice of the accuser within, we will I believe, become enlightened, we will become incredibly powerful.. As Marianne Williamson once famously wrote:

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?

We are all meant to shine. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

As the old chorus says:

Jesus bids us shine with a clear, pure light,
Like a little candle burning in the night;
In this world of darkness, we must shine,
You in your small corner, and I in mine. Amen.