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Who's To Blame? - sermon outline

The following is a sermon and sermon outline preached by S. Baring-Gould and published in 1886. Sift through it and you will be able to easily put together a more contemporary outline on a much needed message.

CASTING BLAME

Matthew 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

INTRODUCTION --A Schoolmaster finds one day that several of his scholars are playing truant. The morning passes and they do not arrive. At last, in the afternoon, the truants turn up. The master has a strong suspicion where they have been: however, he asks, "Why were you not at school this morning?" "Please, sir, mother kept me at home to mind the baby." "Indeed--let me look at your mouth." He opens the mouth, and finds it black inside. "Ah! I thought as much, rambling in the woods, picking and eating whortleberries." So with the others, they make their excuses, but he looks into their mouths, and the black colour betrays them.

Now, my friends, I am almost afraid to look in your mouths, lest I should see them black, not with whortleberries, but with something much sweeter, blame and fault-finding. You are, I suspect, all of you nearly fond of abusing your neighbours, of finding fault, of telling unkind things of them, of blackening their good names.

SUBJECT.--I am going to take as my subject to-day the Casting of Blame.

I. "Be ye merciful," said our Lord, "even as your Father which is in heaven is merciful." He did not mean only in our dealings with others, to be merciful to their bodies, and merciful in not exacting debts, and merciful in not punishing neglect, and so forth, but He meant also that we were to be merciful with their characters. We are not to be ready to impute evil, not ready to cast blame, not ready to believe hard things of others and retail them to our neighbours, but to be very slow to suspect evil, very slow to charge it on others, and exceedingly slow to say what is evil of others.

"Charity," says S. Paul, "is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." It seems to me, that charity is the exact reverse of this fault-finding, blame-imputing character. "Charity thinketh no evil," but how is it with you? Do you not always suspect that the motives of people are bad, do you not always think people are worse than they really are? "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity." Ha! there is a bit of scandal, something very bad has come out about So and so. What a running about from house to house! the village is like a hive of bees swarming. Do you mean to tell me it is not a delight, a joy to you, to have this little bit of iniquity to talk about? I know better. "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity," but charity is not to be found in that tittle-tattling, excited crowd of talkers. "Charity believeth all things"--will, that is, believe and trust, as long as it is possible, that people are not so bad after all, that the stories told are not true, and "Charity hopeth all things," hopes even against hope that it is so.

O! what a blessed thing is charity! S. Paul said he would rather have that, than be able to speak with tongues, and to prophesy; he would rather have that than work miracles. It is a better thing even to have that than Faith. But, alas! if it be such a good thing, it is also a very rare one.

II. How very often we cast blame when there is no cause, and are therefore guilty of serious injustice.

I was one day walking in the street of a little town, when a poor inoffensive dog passed me. He went quietly along without a thought of doing anyone an injury, when he happened to pass a knot of boys just come out of school. At once one of the urchins took up a stone and threw it at him, the others clapped their hands, and hooted after him, "Hit him! Knock him over! Mad dog!" Away ran the unhappy cur, and all the boys yelling after him, throwing dirt, and striking at him with sticks. What next? Everyone in the street ran to the door, and saw the brute tearing down the way, with his tail between his legs. Then out of every door rushed all the house-dogs, the butcher's dog, and the coach-dog, and even the little lap-dog jumped up, and ran down stairs, and out of the door, to join in the barking, and away went all the dogs of the place after the poor wretch. There was a tumult! And the people in their doors and at their windows shouted, and one said, "Kill him! he is mad!" and another, "He has bitten a woman!" and another, "He has stolen some meat!" and another, "He has knocked over a child!"

Now all this arose from one boy throwing a stone at a harmless dog. And all the things said about the dog were untrue. The proverb was verified, "Give a dog a bad name, and you may hang him."

Is not this very much like what takes place among men? Someone throws blame on a poor harmless person for no cause in the world but out of sheer malevolence, or love of mischief, and at once others join in. Everyone has something to say, everyone joins in the general abuse. No lack of blame. No lack of unkind things said. And--all untrue, all unjust!

I do not mean to say that when a person has done what is wrong we are not to speak of it at all; but what I do say is, that we should be very careful indeed not to cast blame till we are quite sure that we are justified in doing so. "As for this way, we know that it is everywhere spoken against," was what was said of Christianity. All sorts of bad, lying things were said of the early Christians, that they killed and ate children, that they practised horrible idolatries: the stories were not true, but they were believed, simply because everyone said these things were done.

III. Now this is the advice I give you:--

- a. Be sure that blame is just before you cast it.
- b. Be merciful in attributing blame even when it is deserved.

First:--Be sure that you have real cause to cast blame, be sure that you are not committing a great injustice, and doing another a grievous injury which is unmerited.

"Do to others as you would they should do to you." Consider how miserable you would feel were you the subject of unmerited blame.

Secondly:--Be merciful in attributing blame even when it is deserved. Remember that you yourself are not guiltless. There are things that you have done which deserve censure quite as much as those things you blame in others. One day a woman, taken in adultery, was brought before Christ, and the Jews desired to stone her to death because of her sin. Then our Lord said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And when they heard it, being convicted by their own consciences, they went out, one by one, beginning at the eldest even unto the last.

I say to you: when you are inclined to cast blame, even when just, think, "Am I without sin, that I should judge and condemn another?"

-- *S. Baring-Gould, The Village Pulpit (Vol. 2)*

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