

The Old Paths

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“A Wardrobe Malfunction”

Jarrod Jacobs

If, by this time, you are not aware of the “fire-storm” that has arisen because of the actions of Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson during the Super Bowl half-time show, consider yourself extremely lucky! Both performers now have apologized for their actions after Timberlake succeeded in revealing part of Jackson’s anatomy to the world. In the series of apologies offered by involved parties, Timberlake apologized for his part in this, saying there was a “wardrobe malfunction.” This is laughable considering he was responsible for literally tearing off a portion of her outfit. Seems to me the wardrobe “functioned” perfectly until he tore it off! When Jackson spoke of the incident and apologized, she said a portion was supposed to have been left behind. I guess this is what Timberlake meant by a “malfunction.” Nevertheless, I maintain that if he hadn’t ripped at the outfit, it wouldn’t have torn at all, and we would have been spared a week’s worth of news segments on what he and she did in front of millions of people.

People have reacted to this event in different ways, but most reactions have been disgust and outrage that it happened at all. To me, the event stands as a statement on how far our society has sunk. Since I was at worship services during most of the “Super Bowl,” I knew nothing of what had happened until later in the evening. Yet, I understand that the actions

of Timberlake and Jackson were but the climax of a half-time show that was filled with sexual images, filthy lyrics, and similar things. I wholeheartedly echo the question I heard one man ask on Monday morning: *“Whatever happened to the marching bands?”* Is this not but one telling factor in showing folks how far we have slipped through the years?

As this saga has played out in the media, and as one party after another (NFL, CBS, etc.) has apologized to an outraged public, the question that kept popping up in my mind was: *“Does anyone know who won the ball game?”* You see, after that foolish half-time incident, the Super Bowl ball game itself, the reason people were “tuning in” or attending, etc., was completely overshadowed!

Yet, is this not the way of sin? Sin is not static, but continues to be in motion, and takes folks (whether knowingly, or ignorantly) down a path that ultimately leads to destruction. We see this when we read Psalm 1:1, and learn of the progressive nature of sin. The man who was not considered “blessed” by God first “walked,” then “stood,” and finally “sat” with the sinners. James made a similar point when he talked about lust first being “conceived,” and then “full grown” when it brought about death (Jas. 1:14-15).

As the old saying goes, sin takes folks farther than they want to go; makes them stay longer than they want to stay; and makes them pay more than they want to pay! Was not the Super Bowl fiasco just the latest example of this truth? This incident took two individuals, as well as a

viewing public, farther than we wanted to go! While Timberlake, Jackson, and others bear their responsibility, let’s also remember that the public has some responsibility as well! Had not a willing public asked entertainers for more and more “sexual themes” and “double entendres” through the years (through the purchase of their products and tickets to their events), people such as Jackson, Timberlake, and a myriad of others would not be doing what they are doing! They’d either be unemployed, or would change their songs and actions to more moral standards, and act accordingly. Therefore, if folks buy their CD’s, watch their movies, their TV shows, etc., does this not give these people the notion that “we” like that stuff?

Remember what Paul said in Romans 1:32? *“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”* In other words, though “we” may not be on the stage, or on the “silver screen;” if we stand idly by and encourage such behavior from the entertainment industry, can we be found guiltless before God?

Yes, sin takes folks farther than they want to go. Compare the TV shows of today with those of just a few years ago. Consider the fact that the list of “taboo” words gets whittled down to less and less as the years pass. Consider the fact that what used to be considered “bathroom talk,” or words not said in “mixed company” are now proclaimed loud and long to anyone within earshot.

Yes, the “wardrobe malfunction” from last Sunday was a tragedy and a travesty. Yet, does not this malfunction also scream to folks that there is a bigger “malfunction” taking place — the abandoning of godly principles that folks should be respecting? There is a “spiritual malfunction” evident today! Society at large encourages folks to “do your own

thing,” and to “live for the moment,” and we are reaping the harvest of that seed that has been sown. (Gal. 6:7-8)

Is it too late? Are we so far gone that there is no hope? I don't think that is the case. I believe so long as we are still breathing, and are still concerned about the present state of things, that we have a chance to change. In a strange way, it was comforting to learn of so many being outraged at the behavior displayed during the Super Bowl's half-time show. At least, one knew he was not alone.

In the long ago, God was looking for just one man to stand in the gap so that He would not have to destroy the nation. Unfortunately, He found none (Ezek. 22:30-31). Personally, I believe there is far more than one person among God's people today who is willing to follow the Lord's will. I also believe there are many yet outside of Christ who would be willing to change if they knew how to change. They need the gospel preached to them (Rom. 10:13-17; I Cor. 1:21). Yet, we all must recognize that it is not going to be easy, nor is it an overnight change. Yet, folks can change and return to the Biblical principles God has described IF men will listen to the word of God and then obey it! All of us have responsibilities to meet.

Let us determine:

1) To respect what the Bible says on ALL subjects, not merely on the ones we want to do anyway. Peter said God's word gives us “*all things that pertain to life and godliness*” (II Pet. 1:3).

2) To repent of wrongdoing, and then go to the Bible to find out what we ought to be doing. God wants “*all*” to “*come to repentance*” (II Pet. 3:9). Let us not merely give verbal assent that we believe the Bible, but let us also be

workers and doers of God's word (Matt. 7:21; Jas. 1:26-27).

3) Not merely to change ourselves, but to also help others change! Part of the responsibility of a Christian is to tell lost souls about Christ (II Tim. 2:2). While some were outraged at the events of last Sunday, they may or may not know “*why*” such is wrong. They may not realize the true nature of sin. May we be aware of such opportunities and show folks the truth of God's word so that they can be free from sin (I Tim. 4:16).

Some made comments concerning the number of children who saw the untoward and lascivious behavior (“*unchaste handling of males and females,*” Strong's) on Sunday night. May parents resolve to teach their children the way of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). May our children see in us godly and proper examples in word and deed (Matt. 5:16; Col. 3:17). Sadly, parents leaving children to raise themselves, or allowing a TV, or the school system, etc., to teach them proper values and morals has resulted in part of the problem we are seeing today. “*...A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame*” (Prov. 29:15).

Conclusion

Ultimately, what this comes down to is that folks need to yield and submit their will to the Father's will. Un-

til this happens, such incidents as happened last week will continue and will flourish. Now that one step has been taken to “*break a barrier,*” or “*push the envelope,*” how long until another move will be made? Remember, sin is not static! There will be a continual progression SO LONG AS there is nothing opposing it! What will we do, friend? The answer to this problem is not found in Washington, at NFL headquarters, nor at CBS. The answer is found in the hearts and minds of folks who will yield to the will of God and in humbleness of heart return to the Lord's way! How many prophets cried out that sentiment in Old Testament times? Through their written records (Heb. 11:4b), they are crying out this same message to us today! James said, “*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded*” (Jas. 4:8). What will your response be? What will my response be? Reformation and restoration begins at home!

May these “*wardrobe malfunctions*” and similar sins which are committed end and end soon. I am convinced that they will end, as soon as our “*spiritual malfunctions*” cease!!

Anvil Sparks

R.L. Whiteside

“Any religious body in the wrong is less harmful as an enemy than as an ally.”

(Doctrinal Discourses, p. 172)

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