

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday March 1, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

Honoring 1 TIMOTHY GOD

HONORING GOD
“The Ministry of Correction”
1 Timothy 5:1-2, Various



Key Reminders for 1 Timothy:

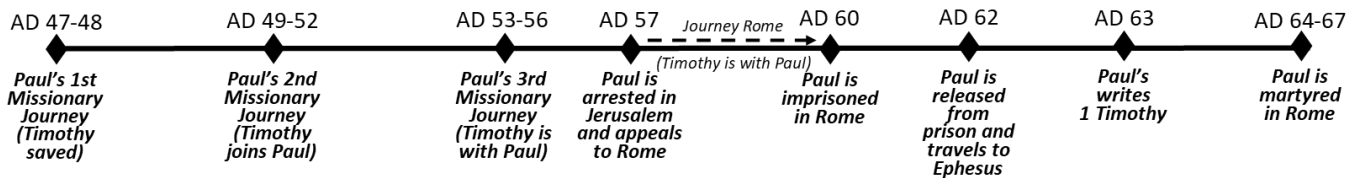
(1) **1 Timothy is a personal letter** – It is unlike most of Paul’s other letters that appear in the New Testament. Remember that most of Paul’s letters were written to churches and/or groups of churches, like Ephesians, Colossians, Galatians (a circular letter), etc. 1 Timothy was not a letter written to a group of Christians (churches). It is written to an individual and should be read and studied with that in mind. It’s personal in nature, rather than corporate. That doesn’t mean it’s not for the church today or applicable for

the church and Christians. It is! It just means that in studying and understanding the letter for context purposes this must be kept in mind. It does have a bearing on interpretation of Paul's letter.

- (2) **1 Timothy is written by Paul to Timothy, his apprentice in ministry** – As already - else's mail, or better said we are privileged by design to get to read someone else's mail. God want us to for a reason. He wants us to apply the truths Paul spoke to Timothy to our own lives. Remember that the name Timothy means "one who honors God," likewise our lives ought to honor God by how we conduct our lives, how we relate to believers in the church, how we serve and lead in the church, our behaviour, our spirit and attitudes, our words, our victory over the very things that defeat us and may keep us from being all that God has called us to be in Christ. Remember that Timothy was a young teenager from the town of Lystra when Paul first met him on his first missionary journey through Asia Minor. Paul lead Timothy to the Lord, as well as the rest of his family... his mother and grandmother. When Paul returned to the area on his second missionary journey, apparently Timothy has grown in his faith to the point that Paul asked him to join him on his missionary journey. Timothy would remain a ministry companion to Paul for the rest of Paul's life, as a faithful servant and fellow ministry.
- (3) **1 Timothy is known as a "Pastoral Epistle" (or letter)** – That makes this personal letter instructional especially for a pastor. There are three "Pastoral Epistles" in all in the New Testament; 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus, all written by Paul. They are "pastoral" in nature. In its simplest form, "pastoral" means pertaining to the pastor and or his responsibilities. The most common definitions of "pastoral" would be 1. Pastoral - of or pertaining to shepherds; hence, relating to rural life and scenes; as in a pastoral life (remember that pastors are often referred to the shepherd of the flock caring for their needs especially spiritual), 2. Pastoral – relating to the care of souls, or to the pastor of a church, as in, pastoral duties or a pastoral letter, 3. Pastoral – used to refer to the part of the work of teachers, preachers (pastors) and priests that involves giving help and advice about personal matters, or giving pastoral care through teaching, sermons, homilies, etc. The Pastoral Epistles are 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. All three are letters from an old man at the close of his ministry who is concerned for his successors in the pastorate. As such, the letters concern the things that would be crucial for the young pastors to understand—church organization and discipline, including such matters as the appointment of elders and deacons, the opposition of rebellious members or false teachers, and the maintenance of doctrinal purity.
- (4) **1 Timothy was written to address problems in the church at Ephesus and encourage their pastor, Timothy** – Timothy would eventually become the pastor of the church at Ephesus, likely around AD 62, following Paul's release from prison. Paul's release allowed him the opportunity to travel to Ephesus and eventually place Timothy in ministry at that church. Paul often sent Timothy to churches as his representative (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:2), and 1 Timothy finds him on another assignment, serving as pastor of the church at Ephesus (1 Thessalonians 1:3)... a troubled church with problems (Revelation 2:4, "... *you have left*

your first love.”). Timothy find’s himself... perhaps at a young age, pastoring a very strategic, yet troubled church with a lot of problems.

(5) 1 Timothy was likely written about AD 63 - The Bible’s silence on the ultimate fate of Paul has generated a great deal of debate in modern times. The book of Acts ends with Paul sitting in a Roman prison awaiting his hearing before the Roman emperor, a privilege of appeal that all Roman citizens like Paul possessed. However, the writing of the Pastoral Epistles clearly dates to a time after the events of Acts. So where was Paul when he wrote 1 Timothy? Paul had expected the Romans to release him from prison, something that likely happened near the end of AD 62 (Philippians 2:24). As previously stated, his release allowed him the opportunity to travel to Ephesus and eventually place Timothy in ministry at that church. Paul then went on to preach in Macedonia, where he heard reports of Timothy’s work at Ephesus that prompted him to write 1 Timothy, probably in AD 63.



“¹Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, ² older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.” – 1 Timothy 5:1-2 (NKJV)

PREVIEW – CASE STUDIES

Some Questions to Consider:

1. *Is it ever right to be confrontational as a Christian?*
2. *When... under what circumstances?*
3. *When is it right to confront and when is it wrong?*
4. *What is the responsibility of a Christian, when he or she sees another Christian brother or sister going astray?*
5. *When is it our business and when is it not our business?*

If you’ve ever done any boating, you know how essential it is to stay on course. If you steer just a few degrees off the desired course, you can wind up far from where you wanted to go. I read once of a shipwreck that happened because a sailor broke off the small tip of his knife blade while he was cleaning the ship’s compass. He didn’t remove it, and that little bit of metal pulled the compass off its true reading, resulting in the ship’s running aground. A slight deviation, if left uncorrected, can result in great devastation.

It’s the same spiritually. Correction is not a nicety or even a pleasant thing, but it’s a necessity. If our lives veer off-course and continue in that wrong direction, it can result in

shipwreck of our faith. Because of that fact, God wants every believer to be involved in the ministry of correction. Often a brother or sister is off course and doesn't know it. God calls us to correct that person in love.

The ministry of correction is essential in the family of God

And that is a Biblical statement, supported throughout God's Word, as we will see in this study. It's essential, but never easy. Not one likes confrontation, and those who say they do... well, check their motives and their spirituality. I dislike nothing in ministry more than to have to confront someone who has erred or drifted with sin in his life. But sometimes it must be done. As we have already mentioned in this study, every believer is in the ministry. And one of the most helpful ministries you can perform is the ministry of correction. Quite often, you can, as a Christians and believer, correct a member of the body, that a pastor or a church leader can't, and do so effectively, because you know the person better than we do. He is your friend, so he's more likely to listen to you than to someone he doesn't know. But it's still not easy to do.

Today I want to talk on how to carry out this ministry of correction properly. We will examine Paul's instructions to Timothy in the first two verses of Paul's letter to Timothy (1 Tim. 5:1-2); but we will also go to some other Scriptures to give us the big picture. I encourage you to take some notes, because you are not exempt from this ministry. Some of you know of fellow believers who need correction. But you haven't gone to them in love and offered correction. Maybe you don't know how or maybe you're chicken. But you're not loving your brother or sister if you let them head toward shipwreck and don't try to help him or her correct course.

We will look first at some hindrances to this ministry; then at some preliminary questions; finally, at the procedure.

HINDRANCES TO CORRECTION

There are a number of barriers which prevent us from correcting those who need it. These need to be removed if we want God to use us in this vital ministry.

6 Hindrances to Our Being Able to Correct Other:

(1) **Fear** – Here's a truth... sometimes, let's just be honest, we're chicken! It's threatening to confront someone who is out of line. I'll be honest, I struggle with anxiety when I have to corrective or confrontational (with anyone by my own kids). How do you overcome this fear? The only thing that helps me is to fear God more than men and to realize that God will hold me accountable if I see someone going astray and do not warn them and seek to correct them. So I do it out of obedience to God.

If your kids, without your knowledge, were playing on a dangerous street, and if another adult saw them in danger and merely shook his head and said, “They shouldn’t do that, they’ll get hurt,” you would be angry if you found out about it. You would say, “You mean to tell me that you saw my kids in danger, and you didn’t do anything about it? Don’t you care about anyone except yourself?” In the same way, God isn’t pleased when we see one of His children, whom He purchased with the blood of His own Son, straying onto a dangerous path while we merely look, shake our heads and say, “He shouldn’t do that; he’ll get hurt,” but do nothing about it.

If you care, you must confront. You must warn the person of the danger of His ways, if for no other reason, at least to absolve yourself of responsibility (Acts 20:26-27; Ezek. 3:17-21). Sheep are valuable to the Shepherd (Acts 20:28). If we love Him, they must also be valuable to us. If you are faithful in this ministry of correction, you’ll often get accused of not being loving. But love is not syrupy sentiment. If someone is heading downstream toward a waterfall, is it loving to stand by shaking your head and watching the person cruise toward destruction, or is it loving to do all you can to warn him? Real love has the courage to confront someone who is going astray. We’re all accountable to God to love others. Obedience to God means that we must swallow our fears and correct those we know of who are going astray.

(2) A misunderstanding of Matthew 7:1 - *“Do not judge lest you be judged.”* This is one of the most misapplied verses in the Bible. We see another believer engaging in sin or heading in a wrong direction and we say, “Well, the Bible says, ‘Judge not,’ so I can’t judge what he’s doing. It’s none of my business.” Or we say, “Who am I to judge?” If that’s what Jesus meant, it would be impossible to shepherd anyone! To minister to people, you must honestly evaluate where they’re at in their walk with Christ and do whatever you can to help them move more toward where they ought to be.

Jesus was talking about hypocritically condemning others for their sins, while you ignore major sins in your own life. He didn’t say that we aren’t to remove specks from our brother’s eye. He did say that we are to deal with the log in our own eye first. That leads to another hindrance...

(3) Awareness of personal sins - Sometimes we’re hesitant to correct others because we know we have sin in our lives that needs to be cleaned up. If we went to correct a sinning brother, he could point the finger back at us and say, “What about you?” So we don’t say anything. If that’s the case, then the obvious solution is, deal with your sins! Confess them to the Lord and turn from them. It is those who are spiritual (spiritually mature) who are to help restore those caught in sin (Gal. 6:1). They do it cognizant of their own propensity toward sin (“looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted”), but not with any known, unconfessed sin in their lives.

- (4) **Laziness** - It's always easier *not* to confront or correct someone. *Always!* It's always a hassle. It takes effort to arrange a time and get together so that you can deal with the issue. But laziness is hardly a good excuse if a person is heading toward spiritual ruin. Love takes effort. Somewhere we got this crazy idea that love is a spontaneous, effortless feeling. But if love just flowed naturally, we wouldn't have to be commanded so often to do it. To obey, you have to confront your love of self above others, which is where laziness comes from. If you love someone, you're willing to inconvenience yourself to help the other person become what God wants him to be.
- (5) **Relative morality** - We live in a culture that believes there are no moral absolutes and that tolerance is the chief virtue. The church has been tainted by this, as seen when a Christian sees another believer doing something clearly against God's Word, but he rationalizes, "Well, it wouldn't be right for me to do that, but maybe it's okay for him." But if it's against God's Word, it's wrong for anyone. Period! God's Word is our unchanging standard. If someone is violating His Word, then we have the responsibility to correct him in the proper way. Correction assumes that there is such a thing as absolute right and wrong, revealed in God's Word.
- (6) **Uncertainty as to whether or not to correct** - This is the hardest area for me. Sometimes it's a judgment call to know whether a problem will correct itself or whether it needs my involvement. Let me caution you about this... some Christians ride around with their biblical six-shooter and whenever they see someone slightly out of line, with lightning speed they let him have it right between the eyes with a well-chosen verse. But often they do it out of spiritual pride, not love, and it usually does more harm than good.

Some Indicators of Readiness to Be Used to Confront or Correct Another:

1. *We need sensitivity to the Holy Spirit to know when to let something go and when to move in with correction –*
2. *We need to cultivate the right heart attitude in confronting a struggling brother or sister –* Remember it is to be done in a spirit of gentleness and love, and in a spirit of restoration
3. *We need to be prayed up, confessed up and at a place in our spiritual walk where we are able to help another with correction –*
4. *We need to be Biblically grounded and accurate in handling correction and confrontation with an erring brother or sister -*
5. *We need be prepared to handle the possible fall-out mentally, emotionally and spiritually –* Even when everything is done right and with the right heart motives, in gentleness and redemptively it can still go bad. The one you are correcting or confronting may not take it well, he or she may be angry, offended, defensive, and even attacking. Be prepared for what may not be a difficult reaction. It still has to be done.l

Beyond these guidelines, again remember you must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's promptings in your own life to know whether or not you should correct someone. I recommend that you study Scripture for models, especially how Jesus and Paul corrected others. And we will come back to these in a minute, but let me first give you a couple circumstances in which we can know when it is time to step in for correction and confronting another...

3 Circumstances in Which Someone Must Be Confronted: (when it must be done)

- 1. Obvious sinful behavior** - If you know someone who is engaging in obviously sinful behavior, then correction is not optional. You may not be the one to do it, but you can't let it go without making sure that it gets done. **READ: Galatians 6:1-5**

"¹Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. ⁵For each one shall bear his own load." – Galatians 6:1-5 (NKJV)

- 2. Major doctrinal error** - Also, if there is a major doctrinal issue at stake which is affecting many people, you must confront it. **READ: Galatians 2:11-14**

"¹¹Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; ¹²for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?" – Galatians 2:11-14 (NKJV)

- 3. Dangerous habit patterns** - Correction is also needed when you detect a wrong or dangerous habit-pattern in someone's life. For example, if you as a Christian man know a brother who is always checking out and flirting with women, you need to help him before he gets into worse trouble.

Now, assuming that you have removed the hindrances and you think that God wants you to correct a brother or sister, how do you go about it? I want to give you seven questions to ask yourself before you go to the person; and then, seven guidelines for giving biblical correction.

PRELIMINARIES TO CORRECTION

Some of these may sound a bit redundant to what we have already say, but I do think they bear further contemplation and understanding. It doesn't hurt to restate them. Here are some important preliminaries to correction...

7 Preliminary Question to Ask Yourself Before You Confront Another in a Ministry of Correction:

- (1) **Is my life an example?** - In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul exhorts Timothy to set an example of godliness. From that foundation, he then can appeal to older men and women, as well as to those younger than himself (5:1-2). (Note also Acts 20:26-27, 31, 33-35; Paul admonished the Ephesian elders from the basis of setting a godly example.) This doesn't mean that you must be perfect, but it does mean that you are walking uprightly with God.
- (2) **Do I have an adequate relationship with the person?** - In 1 Timothy 5:1-2, Paul tells Timothy to couch the ministry of correction in family-like relationships, treating the older men as fathers, the older women as mothers, the younger men as brothers, and the younger women as sisters. (See also Acts 20:37-38; 1 Thess. 2:7-11). It's not always possible to have a deep relationship with those we must correct. But as a rule, the most effective correction takes place when the other person knows from experience that you love him.
- (3) **Do I have the facts?** - Proverbs 18:13 states, *"He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is a folly and shame to him."* Biblical communication is based on truth. Before you correct or confront someone you need to know the facts accurately. Before you correct someone, you need to make sure that you have the full truth about what is going on, and not just one side and not hearsay. Here is another good word from Proverbs 18 in Proverbs 18:17, *"The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him."*
- (4) **Do I have the right motives and objectives?** - Your motive should be to obey God by loving your neighbor (Matt. 22:39). Your objectives should be to restore the person to a right relationship with God and others and to help him grow to maturity in Christ (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1; Col. 1:28). You need to check your heart before you go. Your goal is not to embarrass or ridicule the other person. Nor is it to prove yourself right and the other person wrong. Your goal isn't "to give the other person a piece of your mind," or "to put him in his place" or "to get it off your chest." If you take pleasure in doing it, you probably shouldn't do it until you examine your own heart. Remember, your motive should be love and your goal should be to build up the person in Christ.
- (5) **Do I have the right wording?** - Proverbs 15:1 in the King James says, *"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."* Choose your words wisely! Jesus says (Matt. 18:15) that we are to "reprove" our brother with a view to winning him.

“Reprove” was a legal word used of a lawyer convincing the court of his case. Any attorney worth his salt thinks through what to say and how to say it so as to convince the judge and jury of the truthfulness of his case. So we need to think carefully about what we’re going to say so that our brother will be reconciled with God and with anyone he has sinned against.

The classic biblical example is Nathan when he went to confront King David about his sins of adultery and murder. He told David a story about a rich man who was unwilling to slaughter one of his many lambs, but instead took a poor man’s pet lamb and slaughtered it for his dinner guest. When David grew angry at this injustice, Nathan sprung his trap by saying, **“You are the man!”** David was broken with repentance (2 Sam. 12:1-7). Remember, the goal is to help restore your brother, not blow him away or prove that you’re right and he’s wrong.

- (6) **Is it God’s time for me to go?** - When David sinned with Bathsheba the Lord waited about one year, and then sent Nathan. Before that, David probably wouldn’t have listened. As it was, he was miserable in his guilt, so he was ready for God’s way out (Psalms 38, 51). You must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit as to the right timing. Listen, it’s usually not God’s time for you to correct someone if you haven’t spent time praying about it. A good rule is,

“Don’t approach a person about a problem, until you have approached God about the person.”

Sometimes God answers your prayers and you don’t even have to go to the person. Listen, I can’t tell you how many times I have gone to God with the person and the problem and he has just taken care of it and taken it out of my hands. It’s true! At other times, He will often work to prepare the other person’s heart, and He will work on you to give you the right motives and goal.

- (7) **Am I prepared to risk rejection and attack?** – We’ve already raised the alarm on this one a little. We need to be prepared for this. Even when you follow all of these preliminary steps, a person often will be defensive and angry at you. Many times he will respond by criticizing or attacking you. If you lose your cool and counterattack him, you just lost your ability to correct biblically. You can’t take the person’s attack on you personally. You’re God’s spokesman, and being a prophet is sometimes a hazardous job. But you just calmly stand your ground and keep speaking the truth in love.

After running through this check list of questions, follow this procedure...

PROCEDURE FOR CORRECTION

These procedures to follow for correcting and confronting another are not only some good principles to follow, I believe they are wise (sage) advice...

Wise Procedures to Follow In Correction of Another:

- (1) **Be as private as the wrong** - If it's a private matter, don't correct the person in front of others. Don't take someone with you at first if it is a strictly personal matter. Matthew 18:15-17 gives the order: First private confrontation, then one or two more with you, then church action (on a serious matter). Some matters require public confrontation. In Galatians 2:11-14, Paul confronted Peter *"in the presence of all."* It was a public matter affecting many people, so Paul dealt with it publicly.
- (2) **Be cautious and wise** - Paul tells Timothy to deal with the younger women as sisters *"in all purity"* (1 Tim. 5:2). Listen, many pastors fall into sin because they disregard Paul's warning here.

I actually know of one who was asked to counsel with a woman who was going through marital difficulties. He had an affair with her, divorced his wife, left his 2 kids, and married the woman he was supposed to be counseling. The way it started was perhaps innocent enough, but he obviously didn't deal with her "in all purity" as Paul said to Timothy. That's a true story. It shows how if you play with the enemy, he'll eat you up! *If you don't want to fall over the cliff, don't go near the edge!* You are not invincible. No matter how well-meaning you may be in trying to help another person with their problem, you are susceptible to the same sin (Gal. 6:1, "looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted.")

- (3) **Be direct and open** - Don't beat around the bush. And this is absolutely crucial... **DON'T GO BEHIND THE PERSON'S BACK AND TALK ABOUT THE PROBLEM TO OTHERS WHO AREN'T INVOLVED.** Folks, this concerns me as much as anything I see... even around here. In Galatians 2:11, Paul confronted Peter to his face. He didn't bring up the problem when Peter was not there and try to build support for his point of view. He spoke directly and openly.
- (4) **Be humble, not judgmental** - You are a fellow sinner (Gal. 6:1). The next time, you may be the one needing correction. So you go in humility, with understanding. You do not attack the person, but try to help the person attack the problem. As Paul warns us in *1 Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."* You must take that word seriously.

(5) **Be gentle, but firm** - *“Do not sharply rebuke”* (1 Tim. 5:1). The word means, don’t strike him with words. Don’t ride roughshod over the person. “Appeal” is the same word translated “exhortation” in 4:13. It means to come alongside to help.

Correcting or giving counsel is the same as teaching, except it’s done personally, to help the individual see how Scripture applies to his situation. Many Scriptures that talk about correction also mention the need for gentleness (Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:25). Don’t blast. But also, don’t let the person rationalize or minimize his sin or shift the blame. You may need to point out the gap between what he is saying and what he’s doing. You may need to show him Scripture and ask, “How does what you said (or did) fit with what God’s Word says?” You aren’t helping him if you allow him to justify sin. You must be gentle, but firm.

(6) **Be able to point him to God’s Word and to the necessary steps toward restoration** - God’s Word is our sole and common source of authority. You need to have your case for correction solidly built upon God’s Word so that you can gently, but firmly, keep bringing the person back to the issue: What does the Bible say? You want him or her to know that their problem is not with you; it is with God, whose Word he is violating. Also, be able to direct him to some biblical steps of action. Confrontation alone is not sufficient; you must also bring restoration and healing through the Word. Your goal is to restore.

(7) **Be persistent if necessary** - Once may not be enough. (Acts 20:31, “night and day for three years ...”) You don’t give up if the person doesn’t respond immediately. You may need to back off and continue praying while you wait for the right opportunity. You don’t want to nag and drive him further away. But neither do you give up and say, “I tried once to correct him, but he just wouldn’t listen!” Where would you be if the Lord gave up on you after His first attempt to correct you?

CONCLUSION

Back during the Communist regime in Russia a joke was going around about Boris the Russian who arrived at the Pearly gates and was welcomed by St. Peter. Showing him around, Peter said, “You can go anywhere you want except on the pink clouds.” “Why can’t I go there?” Boris asked. “Because,” Peter replied, “the pink clouds are reserved for those who did something great.” “But I have done something great,” Boris protested. “I made a speech at the Kremlin confronting the government and all the corrupt leaders.” “Really,” said Peter. “When did this happen?” Boris looked at his watch. “About two minutes ago.”

One moral of that story is that confronting sin doesn’t always work! Sometimes you pay a price! But we shouldn’t do it because it works or doesn’t work. We do it because God has commanded us to love one another. Part of love is this ministry of correction, done in the context of God’s family, in the manner I have outlined today.

Some of you may not have immediate occasion to apply this. But you will soon, if you are committed to the ministry of building people as God wants you to be. Others have immediate situations that require loving correction. I encourage you to obey the Lord in this matter.

I want to close with James' words in James 5:19-20, *¹⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*"