

PSYCHOGENIC HEMATIDROSIS

“And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground”(Luke 22:44)

Perhaps you have heard the old joke about the boy who came home from Bible School. His mother questioned him about the lesson to make sure he was paying attention. His version of the lesson went something like this. *“Moses led God’s people out of Egypt to a big sea. When there was no way to get across, he got on the radio and called for the navy to build a floating bridge. The good guys got across the bridge and when the bad guys tried to get across, Moses got back on the radio and called for the dive bombers. The dive bombers blew up the bridge and all the bad guys drowned”*. When pressed about the truthfulness of this account the young man said: “Momma, you never would believe it the way they told it”!

This humorous story illustrates the ever present temptation to alter the truth and say what people want to hear. The Bible, however, always tells the truth whether anyone believes it or not. So Luke, the beloved physician, told the truth about what happened to Jesus in Gethsemane. He said that the “sweat” of Jesus was like “drops of blood” falling to the ground, and this is precisely what happened. Many Bible scholars, however, have questioned Luke description and considered his words to be figurative. For centuries believers struggled to explain what happened without any scientific explanation for what happened. Now, however, we know that there is a rare medical condition known as “psychogenic hematidrosis”. This stress induced problem can cause droplets of blood to enter the sweat glands and exit the body as perspiration. During the last years of the twentieth century 76 cases of hematidrosis were studied and classified. While the loss of blood is usually minimal, hematidrosis can cause the skin to be extremely tender and fragile. This, of course, would have made the physical suffering of Christ even more severe. The fact that this medical condition is rare, and that millions didn’t know about it, did not keep Luke from telling the truth.

Shortly before his death, Paul warned about a time when truth would be out of fashion. **“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.” (2 Tim 4:3-5)** Unfortunately, we are living at a time when “telling the truth” and “enduring hardship” go hand in hand.

Today wise people wash their hands before eating. There was a time, however, when doctors didn’t even wash their hands before surgery. The man who dared to require doctors to wash their hands was fired from the hospital and ultimately died in an insane asylum. His name was Ignaz Phillip Semmelweis (1818 - 1865).

But ignorance about germs pales into insignificance by comparison to ignorance about sin. Jesus came to take away sin. He didn’t come to condemn the world, but to save it. He said: **“I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” (John 18:37)** Those who do not love the truth and who do not listen to Jesus cannot be saved (2 Thess. 2:10). Such people are not only vulnerable to “counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders”, but God Himself has promised to send them “powerful delusions” so they will believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:11)

In the final analysis you either love the truth, or you don’t. In ancient times when wicked men exchanged the truth of God for a lie they worshiped and served the creation more than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). That’s why God gave them over to shameful lusts, depraved minds, and abominable behavior. Unfortunately, history seems to be repeating itself.