

## **DIRECTLY SPEAKING**

Romans 3:23 ... “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”

There were many things I had to adjust to when I relocated to the Philippines from America, as you might imagine. Traditions, culture, language, attitudes, morality, belief systems, ethics, and more, are very different here than in my own culture. One of the things that was most difficult for me, and continues to be a challenge eleven years later, is that many Filipinos find it unbearable to hear the truth spoken in a direct manner. For instance, many believe that a lie is not a lie. It is a misunderstanding. Stealing is really borrowing. Being habitually late for work is expected, not a reason to be fired. Striking one's wife is justified. Cursing someone is not an insult, it is a joke. Making a girl pregnant is not immoral, it is a boy's acceptable nature. Using government funds by an elected official for his or her personal application is the benefit of public service.

If you criticize someone for one of these actions, you must couch your words softly or they will be offended, which in their mind makes you more guilty than them. Several years ago, our ministry conducted a daily feeding program in a school. Parents and teachers informed us that one teacher took food from our supplies every day for his own use, even though the MOA clearly stated the food was only for children. After several weeks of this behavior, we asked the Barangay captain to investigate and he confirmed it. Together with the school head, they filed a complaint with DepEd. The father of the teacher angrily intervened, saying the Barangay captain's use of the word “stealing” was too harsh and unfair. It turned out that this particular teacher already had a record with the police for previous thefts at businesses in town. DepEd's response was to transfer the teacher to another school, where barangay officials there demanded his removal for public drunkenness. DepEd responded by transferring him to yet another school, where he continues these behaviors today.

Why did I mention this? Because it provides insight into the resistance of many Filipinos to read the Bible, and it explains why so many pastors neglect the hard truths of the Bible in their sermons. The Bible speaks of sin, judgement, and morality very directly, even harshly, because these are the all-important issues that separate man from God and lead men to hell. Today's verse does not say, “for some have made minor mistakes.” No, it says, “ALL have SINNED and FALL short.” If you have read these devotionals regularly or know me personally, you know I speak directly and truthfully, especially when it comes to life and death matters such as your spiritual health. If you have trouble listening to the truth, you will find it hard to read the Bible. Please understand, that there is no more important teaching for you than that which comes from God's Word, and if you reject the direct and truthful language of the Bible, you are rejecting God's Words. I do not care if you reject my words, but please do not reject God's words, even when they offend or insult you.

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