



Bethany Lutheran Church & Preschool  
5051 McCarty Road  
Saginaw, MI 48603  
[www.bethanysaginaw.com](http://www.bethanysaginaw.com)  
Phone: 989-793-9579

## Viewpoints

*Viewing life as Christ's cross-scarred hand points out the blessings he's overseeing.*

### Peer Pressure<sup>2</sup> - March 13, 2013

Sixteen year-old Lori lost consciousness at a concert. A month later, she passed out again at her homecoming dance. She was one of fourteen students from a high school in New York State who became ill with a variety of unusual symptoms that included twitching limbs, spasms of the neck or face and stuttering.

Because the big-ticket item in common with these teens was their school, health authorities made thorough investigations of the facility and grounds. More than 6,000 pages of data from a plethora of tests of the air, water, structure and soil showed nothing out of the ordinary.

As described in the sermon of March 10<sup>th</sup> the social connections within this group of teens was apparently so strong, it infected the whole group. Although somewhat rare, this phenomena has been observed throughout history. We've all heard of peer pressure, which influences an individual to link his or her behavior to the group. Well, this condition might be described as a peer pressure that's squared— an exponentiation of peer pressure by the power of two.

And what happens when the psyche of a group is multiplied by bad thinking and disordered reasoning? This is the type of peer pressure that Jesus encountered among the influential Jewish religious leaders called Pharisees. The psyche of the Pharisees was as powerful as it was wrong.

- Even as one Pharisee, Nicodemus, was attracted to Jesus' teachings, we read how he met with Jesus in a spasmed manner: in flickering shadows under the cover of night (John 3:1-2ff).
- When the Pharisees saw how the whole country seemed poised to follow Jesus, Caiaphas the high priest twitched: "It is better that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." And the Pharisees as a group stuttered and convulsed in syncopation (John 11:45-49).

It was the psyche of the Pharisees to believe that forgiveness for sins was earned by one's hard work at producing good works that moved God to accept him or her. This is why the psyche of the group converted into the physical actions of arresting Jesus, of pushing him through a faux trial, and of pressuring Governor Pilate to condemn him to death by crucifixion. And the Pharisees' psyche that twitched in hatred for Jesus affected others in Jerusalem who also started convulsing: "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

But before we condemn the Pharisees for spreading a Peer Pressure<sup>2</sup> that afflicted others in Jerusalem, consider how the group mentality of your own friends may be influencing you to think and act in ways contrary to God's truth. Satan can use peer pressure to lead a child of God astray.

- Have you been influenced by others so that your godly will melted?
- Has the immoral standards of society, coupled with the encouragement of another, led you into sinful sexual relations?
- Has the corporate mindset led you to join in workplace cheating and falsification?
- Are you secretly acting out in ways that, in a moment of honest reflection, you know God hates?

If your heart is broken and your soul sorrows over your sin, then I have good news for you: you are forgiven because Jesus gave himself to be punished in your place. Forgiveness is the gracious gift earned by Jesus that he freely gives to you, as you through faith are led to trust that his gift is true. **“To the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him’”** (Paul in Romans 4:5-8, quoting David who wrote Psalm 32:1-5).

And the joy of Christ's forgiveness is the spiritual antidote against the powerful pressures of this dark world that seek to gain influence over your eternity. ✠✠✠

This Viewpoint is a companion piece to [the March 10, 2013 sermon “Despair and Deliverance”](#) that's posted online in both video and audio formats. Thanks to the new audio/sound equipment installed by Simoni Systems Inc., we can professionally record and post Bethany's sermons online.

Source Material (Links may become inactive over time.)

[Girls with mysterious Tourette - like symptoms...](#) @New York Daily News

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*Blessings to you and your loved ones, Pastor Mike Nitz*

