

Central Shelby SOWER



"A sower went out
to sow his seed...
The seed is the
word of God."
--Luke 8:5,11

REMEMBER THE MAINE!

Yesterday (February 15, 2014) marked the 116th anniversary of the sinking of the *USS Maine*. The *Maine* was one of the first American battleships, a little more than a football field in length and weighing more than 6,600 tons. Not long after it first left harbor it was sent to Cuba to protect U.S. interests, after a rebellion broke out in Havana against Spanish rule.

At 9:40 pm, February 15, a massive explosion rocked the *Maine*, obliterating the forward third of the ship. The remaining wreckage quickly settled to the bottom of Havana's harbor, 266 U.S. servicemen losing their lives as a result. Only 89 survived.

A year later the recovered bodies of sailors who died on the *Maine* were brought back to the United States for burial at Arlington National Cemetery. In 1915 President Woodrow Wilson dedicated a memorial, which included the ship's main mast, to those who died. The remains of some 165 sailors are buried beneath that mast. Tara and I have visited the memorial several times on visits to our nation's capital. It's a sobering monument to the catastrophe.

What sank the *USS Maine*? Foul play was suspected by many. But no one, save God, knew the cause at the time. The *New York Journal* (owned by William Randolph Hearst) and *New York World* (Joseph Pulitzer) both devoted intense coverage to the story, exaggerating and twisting information, insisting that the *Maine* had either hit a mine or been bombed. While neither explicitly blamed Spain for the tragedy, they did their best to bring their readers to form that conclusion. They succeeded. Partly due to the coverage from these papers, the American public and many in Congress were ready to retaliate against Spain. "*Remember the Maine!*" became a popular slogan. While the *Maine's* destruction did not result in an immediate declaration of hostilities, the press' coverage of it was a factor that led to the start of the Spanish-American War just two months later, April 1898.

QUESTION: Have we ever behaved like those newspapers? Have we ever spread information about some person(s) – information which we knew we weren't sure about but, because it would help form a 'right' conclusion in the minds of our hearers, nevertheless circulated?

Before we ever think about circulating some rumor, there are things we ought to consider:

[1] Admittedly, there is a good percentage of accurate information which, while true, *still* shouldn't be circulated. Surely, then, any bogus or questionable information never should be. Right?

[2] The dispensing of any misleading information, even if 'only' implied (but not explicitly stated), is deceptive and wrong. Read the description of the 'worthless person' (Proverbs 6:12-15). God will 'break' such a person!

[3] Described above are actually the ways of the majority of gossipers. They think their cause is good and just, while yet failing to see their lack of objectivity. Beloved, do we think we're not susceptible to such self-bias? (Proverbs 26:12) The truth of the matter is, the 'end' never justifies the 'means,' no matter how 'righteous' one's cause. This goes for the information-spreading business. (*Especially* the information-spreading business.)

[4] Finally, such information, once disseminated, can destroy reputations and lead to 'war' – war between neighbors, friends, or brothers (Proverbs 16:28; 26:20-21). God will hold responsible anyone who spreads such (6:19).

Remember the *Maine*? Yes – let's. Let's remember to watch our words. Let's remember the potential power of words, whether explicitly or implicitly spoken. And let us be resolved to never be one who furthers their agenda, no matter how just, by spreading tales.

--Mike Noble