

## **The Bible and the Headlines: Whistle Blower**

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Although originating in London, the Telegraph features “celebrity” obituaries from both sides of the pond on its front page. What makes these obituaries noteworthy is that in many cases, these “celebrities” have done amazing things, but in a bygone era or in an obscure field of human endeavor. Their accomplishments are no longer remembered by the general public, and thus these forgotten champions do not rate a front-page obituary on other media platforms. The Telegraph featured one of these “celebrity” obituaries this week.

On August 2 the Telegraph presented, “Peter Buxtun, Whistleblower Who Exposed America’s Biggest Medical Research Scandal – Obituary.” The scandal was that the US Public Health Service was the creator of “. . . a 40-year federal experiment conducted on 399 black men with syphilis to see what would happen if the disease were left untreated.” The subjects of the study were never told they had a sexually transmitted disease. Their physicians told these men they had “bad blood.” Many of these men went on to infect their wives and children. Peter Buxtun brought this truth to light.

Two weeks prior to the Telegraph article, Peter Buxtun’s passing was covered by the Associated Press on July 17<sup>th</sup> in a back page article titled, “Tuskegee Syphilis Study Whistleblower Peter Buxtun Has Died at Age 86.” In this obituary the AP congratulates itself for its role in Buxtun’s whistleblowing by noting, “Documents that Buxtun provided to The Associated Press, and its subsequent investigation and reporting, led to a public outcry that ended the study in 1972.” Buxtun had informed his supervisors of his ethical concerns in 1966, however, “In 1967, he was summoned to a meeting in Atlanta, where he was chewed out by agency officials for what they deemed to be impertinence.” Only the publication of the AP investigation brought the scrutiny that stopped the experiment and helped the survivors to receive treatment.

On 18 July the Times of Israel ran their version of the AP article in, “Peter Buxtun, Who Blew Whistle on Cruel US Medical Study on Black Men, Dies at 86.” The Israeli news source explained, “Buxtun, who was born . . . to a Jewish father and a Roman Catholic mother. . . grew up listening to tales of the Holocaust told by an uncle, a German officer who tried and failed to prevent Nazi soldiers from murdering civilians.” The Tuskegee research reminded Buxtun “. . . of Nazi medical experiments.” His response was, “We can’t be doing this.” Buxtun succeeded where his uncle had failed.

The Bible has a whistle-blower among its “celebrities.” The whistle-blower case did not involve illicit medical experiments, but rather a government official committing sexual immorality and murder. The perpetrator was King David. His abuse of office began when King David sent members of his staff to bring to his room the wife of a man on King David’s security detail (2 Sa 11:2-4 and 1 Chr 11:25 & 41). The woman became pregnant from their tryst and she notified the king (2 Sa 11:5). King David had the woman’s husband killed to cover up David’s adultery (2 Sa 11:14-15).

God summoned the prophet Nathan to act as whistle blower on David's crimes (2 Sa 11:27 and 12:1). Nathan told the king a parable about a rich man who stole a poor man's only lamb. King David was infuriated with the man in the parable and said to Nathan: "As the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die!" (2Sa 12:5). Nathan then blew the whistle on the king's transgressions and said, "You are the man!" (2 Sam 12:5-7). David responded to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." After David's repentance, Nathan told David, "The LORD has taken away your sin . . . However, because you treated the LORD with such contempt, the son born to you will die" (2 Sa 12:13-14). After this confrontation, Nathan continued to serve David's government as whistleblower (1 Ki 1:24-27).

In Buxtun's obituary the Telegraph stated, "Buxtun rejected the suggestion that he himself had done anything out of the ordinary," The prophet Nathan probably would have said that he only did what God wanted him to do. All I know is that the world needs more of these "celebrities."