

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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THE PATTERN FOR PERSONAL APOSTASY

It seems to me that even evil follows a predictable pattern. I have seen one or two persons, on rare occasions, suddenly and unexpectedly bolt from the faith and forsake God – seemingly all in one motion. However, this has certainly been the exception and not the rule. Most people who leave the faith do so gradually. And when they do, they follow what almost appears to be an assigned course prescribed for the purpose of absenting oneself from the faith and separating oneself from a divine connection with God.

One who falls away from Christ usually begins by neglecting his private worship. For instance, he will go for long periods without giving any time to meditation about God. Even when he is not under the duress of existing circumstances, he rarely ever contemplates anything about his personal relationship with God. He, because of this same type of neglect, stops praying and giving thanks to God for his goods, health, or others of his blessings. He feels smugly secure in his own egotistical pride and begins to reason that humility is a weakness, tears are for “softies,” and that things like moral courage, sacrifice, and virtue, are not worthy of his time or attention. In short, the time he once gave to personal devotion to glorify God is now totally wasted in efforts to satisfy himself.

One who becomes disinterested in spiritual service will soon begin to show a lack of interest in the public worship services. No one can, for any length of time, “fake” interest in a cause. His lack of attention will soon expose his true feelings. So it is with one who leaves his first love. He starts the process by no longer listening attentively to the songs, the sermons, the prayers. His mind is no longer “tuned in” to those things which should occupy his attention, and even though it may outwardly appear to be otherwise, he really is doing no more than occupying a pew.

The next thing you will notice about our wandering brother is that he will become sporadic in his attendance, particularly on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights. Then it won't be long before he ceases to avail himself of the opportunities at all. He makes for himself

excuses that are logical only to him and make no sense at all to those who are anxious about his seeming lack of interest in the work of the church where he is supposedly a member.

Then when someone confronts him about his obvious lack of concern, he is immediately insulted and becomes indignant. He just can't imagine anyone thinking he is not as faithful as he should be. Why, the very idea! At about that time the excuses begin to pour out with the rapidity of white water rapids. The number of "reasons" for his lack of participation are so emphatic that it becomes obvious that too much emphasis becomes no emphasis at all. It's now apparent – if only to him – that someone is "out to get him," that he is "just as good as so-and-so," and that if he told all he knows about the other members there would be a moral explosion of major proportions.

Finally, he quits. He now has what he has sought for some time – a reason to leave. And, mind you, that "reason" has nothing whatever to do with him, nor is he leaving because of his own neglect, indifference, or lethargy. You see, he was driven away. The blame belongs on the church. They never wanted him there in the first place. How sad! How very sad!

The devil is subtle, cunning, crafty. He doesn't often invite people into the slime pits of sin; rather, he induces them a bit at a time. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Hebrews 2:1).

- Dee Bowman

AND PETER REMEMBERED THE WORDS OF JESUS

The poignant words that serve as our title were taken from Matthew 26:75. They are found in a passage that will serve to recall the situation to the mind's eye. "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly." Doubtless the great fisherman apostle never forgot that moment. Tears and time did not erase the agony and remorse of the regretful event.

Perhaps there is no connection; it may be but a coincidence of Scripture, if there be any such thing, but in the second epistle by the same apostle we find the repetition of the word "remembrance." "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance. . . . Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to

have these things always in remembrance” (2 Pet. 1:12-15). “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful” (2 Pet. 3:1, 2). Peter once forgot the word of Jesus. It came crashing to his remembrance in a painful manner. When the Lord looked at him after that rooster crowed the third time, it pierced his heart, “and he went out, and wept bitterly.”

Could it be that Peter wanted no one to endure the thing that haunted him? He knew what it meant to be reminded of the words of Jesus. He understood the way of sin when the word of Jesus is forgotten. Therefore, he was not negligent to put the brethren “always in remembrance” of the word of God as delivered by the apostles and prophets. It is an engaging and intriguing thought. But regardless of whether or not that was the compelling idea behind Peter’s words, let us not fail to do as he urged, that is, remember the word of Christ. “Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119: 11).

- Larry Ray Hafley

BARNABAS

Have you ever met someone who was so easy to love? At your very first meeting you just immediately knew there was something different. I think Barnabas was that kind of person.

Barnabas was the right man in the right place at the right time. In the transitional period of time for early Christians it was a difficult time period for some. Gentiles were being brought to the Lord, which necessitated great adjustments on the part of Jewish Christians. Men with cool heads, conciliatory dispositions, who were peace makers were needed. The Jerusalem church recognized Barnabas as the ideal man for this time (Acts 11:19-20). Further, the Holy Spirit recognized Barnabas was the ideal man for this time (Acts 13:2,3).

One thing that made Barnabas so ideal for the job was his ability to gain acceptance among both Jews and Gentiles. Two occasions demonstrate this: The events of the famine throughout the world (Acts 11:27-30), and the controversy over circumcision (Acts 15:1-2). Further, the church in Antioch, made up mostly of Gentiles, had great confidence in Barnabas. What a great asset to have such a man who could work with two widely divergent classes of people.

Another reason Barnabas was so important during this time period was his ability to exhort. Our first introduction to him demonstrates his ability as an exhorter. In fact, he is given the name Barnabas because it means, “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36-37). He

was a man who was persuasive. He had the ability to move people to do what was right. He had a genuine concern for the well-being of others and had the ability to infuse that in others. He believed in people. There is no better illustration of this than with Saul of Tarsus in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-27). For good reason the church at Jerusalem had refused Saul, but Barnabas stood up for him. Risky! Barnabas knew Saul had changed. Then, when the work in Antioch needed help Barnabas called for Saul to come help. Saul's destiny as an effective apostle is tied to Barnabas' ability to help him over the rough places.

Again, Barnabas was the right man in the right place in spite of his weaknesses (Gal.2:11-13). Men of great faith are great, not because they are perfect, but because they are able to overcome their imperfections through faith in Christ. The very disposition that made him great in many areas left him vulnerable in other areas. His disposition to believe in people may have left him open to be influenced by Peter. We should not be surprised the very thing that makes a person strong also makes them weak.

Who is the Barnabas in your life? Who is the one who helps you in your weaker moments? Who will stand up for you when you are right and everyone else thinks you are wrong? We are debtors to them. That debt can only be paid by being a Barnabas for someone who needs help. All around us are men and women, boys and girls, people who hurt and people lost who need a Barnabas. We ask not who will help me, but who can I help? Barnabas is needed in every age.

- Rickie Jenkins

> "Failure is the path of least persistence!"

> "Your temper may get you into trouble but it is your pride that keeps you there!"

> "Life is tragic for the person who has plenty to live on and nothing to live for!" - Robert Fisk

> "A little sin will add to your trouble, subtract from your energy, and multiply your difficulties!"

> "Worry pulls tomorrow's cloud over today's sunshine!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"The Christian's Standard For Morality!"* (Text: Titus 2:11-12); Sunday evening: *"The Strange Ways of God!"* (John 11:1-16).