

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED

“You have been warned.” It you hear or see this statement, it means there is some danger ahead and you need to act appropriately in order to avoid it. If you ignore the warning and fail to prepare for the situation you are being warned about you proceed at your own peril and you have to accept the consequences of your actions. But, if you heed the warning then the tragedy can be avoided. Let me give you a personal illustration.

The last of August I had just finished writing an article under the above title, intending to publish it in the bulletin Sept. 3. Right after I finished the article, before I could save it, my computer crashed, and the article was lost, along with everything else on the computer. This caused me to buy another computer. Fortunately, I had purchased the Carbonite backup, and have regained most of the items of the other computer, but not this article.

A lesson I learned from this experience, and it suits the article title, is that computers can crash unexpectedly. Through the years I had heard warnings that computers are subject to crash at any time, so people need to back up everything on the computer for when it happens. Even though I never thought it would happen to me, I heeded the warning, and was prepared for the crash. I had a system in place and therefore I have been able to restore most of the material from the old computer onto the new computer.

But, the crash of a material computer is a minor thing, compared to the fact that our souls are in danger of being lost eternally. Some may not believe this but every human being has an eternal soul, a part of our makeup that will live on when the physical body dies. Eccl. 12:7 teaches, “Then the dust (physical body which God formed from the dust of the ground Gen. 2:7) will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.” Jas. 2:26 teaches, “the body without the spirit is dead.” Some try to argue that the spirit or soul is just the breath of life, given when God breathed into the body He had formed of dust, “and man became a living soul.” But, read the passages carefully. Common sense tell us that the soul/spirit is more than just breath or wind. Why would the wind return to God? Jesus Himself taught, by asking a question, using necessary

inference, that the soul/spirit of man is the most important part of man's existence, for it is eternal. "For what profit is it to a man, if he gain the whole world, and loses his soul, and what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt.16:26.

Yes, every person has an eternal soul, but because all mankind are sinners, after they die, their souls/spirits are condemned to live eternally in the hell God has prepared for the devil and his angels (those who serve him), Matt. 25:41. God does not want people to lose their souls so He sent His Son into the world to become a sacrifice, and through the shedding of His blood, man could find redemption and have their souls cleansed of sins 1 Pet.1:18-19. When one turns to Jesus, truly believing Who He is, and what He has done to save man, he will repent of his sins, and confess that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior. He then obeys Jesus' command to be baptized and have his sins washed away (Mk.16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). In doing this he makes his preparation for the life to come.

Why is this preparation necessary? Because God has prepared a Day of Judgment when all must give account of their lives (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Cor.5:10). God has sent out the warnings that this day is coming and they had better prepare for it. God is delaying the time, giving man sufficient time to prepare. No one can say they haven't been warned.

In the ancient past God was preparing to destroy mankind because of their wickedness (Gen. 6). The whole world was following the evil intents of their hearts, all except Noah (Gen. 6:8-12). Because of his life, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. God issued a warning to Noah of what He was about to do. What did Noah do about the warning? What Noah did about the warning made all the difference in the world. He heeded the divine warning and began building the ark just like God instructed him to do. While he built it he preached to the people warning them about what God was planning to do. But the rest of the people ignored the warnings and when the flood came they all drowned. They lost their lives, even though they had been warned and given time to repent. Noah built the ark as instructed and he and his house were saved from the flood that covered the world (Heb.11:7). What if he had not listened? The rest of the world was warned for over 100 years but they ignored the warnings, and they drowned in the flood.

Beloved, please listen. God is sending us warnings that one day the Judgment is coming. The hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and fires are signals of God great power, and man's inability to resist Him. He does not deliberately do these things, but He allows them to occur since they follow the natural laws He set in motion at creation. He has the ability to prevent them if He chooses, and sometimes, because of the sincere, persistent prayer of faithful brethren He intervenes in ways we cannot understand. People need to take heed to what is happening and change their lives while there is time.

All of us have been warned that this life is temporary and a day of judgment is coming. After the judgment, we will have to spend eternity in heaven or hell, depending on whether we have heeded the warning and made the proper preparation while we are alive. "You have been warned." What are you doing about it? It's your move (Amos.4:12).

- Tommy Thornhill

What Is Forgiveness?

It is not a toleration of sin. As Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Purge out therefore the old leaven A little leaven leaveth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:5,6,7). Sin is corrupting and contagious; if tolerated, it will contaminate the whole church. "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth" (Jas. 3:5).

No Christian should flauntingly display his piety, purity or righteousness to condemn and execute judgment upon an erring child of God (Gal. 6:1). Neither must Christians overlook or intentionally minimize sin. Let sin appear sinful, condemning as it really is, so the victim can understand and be brought to repentance for his salvation (Rom. 6:23; Jas. 5:16; 1 Pet. 1:3-9). The first consideration given for going to one who has trespassed against you, or one who is overtaken in a fault, is to save that person (Matt. 18:15; Luke 17:3; Gal. 6:1).

A good definition of forgiveness is, "An attitude of heart which erases the deed or sin, and restores the offender to the former state and affection of the offended one." Forgiveness, to me, means as the writer states in Hebrews 10:17, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." So far as you are concerned, his sins are as never committed. One must never bring them up again.

Jesus said, "If thy brother trespass against thee rebuke him: if he repents forgive him" (Luke 17:3). Which is more important, "Rebuke him" or "Forgive him"? How many times should one forgive another? If he repents seven times in one day and asks forgiveness, "forgive him" (Luke 17:4), and Matthew adds, "Until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22). I can well understand why the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." Jesus is not minimizing sin or justifying the sinner. He is teaching forgiveness. We must forgive to be forgiven (Matt. 6:12,14,15). The way brethren and local churches teach and act regarding a preacher who sins, will have much to do with his "getting the pieces back together," saving his soul, ability, knowledge and experience for the good of all.

What about Peter? He was wrong. Paul withstood him at the face but he did it to help Peter get right and keep preaching (Gal. 2:11-14). Apollos was doctrinally wrong. He was

taught the way of the Lord more perfectly and sent on his way - preaching Jesus (Acts 18:24-19:1-5).

Finally, it seems to me, there can be no question about what attitude Christians must have toward a brother who manifests sincere repentance and the reparation of life. It must be an attitude of forgiving, receiving, encouraging and rejoicing in the Lord. For this our brother was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. Let us make merry and rejoice with the angels of heaven (Luke 15:7,10,21-24). May the elder brothers, as given in Luke 15, be few and may they learn before it is eternally too late, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 5:15).

- S. Leonard Tyler, From "Putting The Pieces Back Together," via Guardian of Truth XXVIII: 1, pp. 17-20,
January 5, 1984

- > "Spend your time in nothing which you know must be repented of; in nothing on which you might not pray for the blessing of God; in nothing which you could not review with a quiet conscience on your dying bed; in nothing which you might not safely and properly be found doing if death should surprise you in the act!" - Richard Baxter

 - > "Because you have an occasional spell of despondency, don't despair. The sun has a sinking spell every night!"

 - > "Life is too short for us to do everything we want to do; but it is long enough for us to do everything God wants us to do!"

 - > "The things that will destroy America are: prosperity at any price, safety first instead of duty first, the love of soft living, and the get-rich-quick theory of life!" - Theodore Roosevelt

 - > "Three most difficult things to do are: keep a secret, forget an injury, and make good use of your leisure time!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Tom Holley will be bringing the lessons from the Bible this week in our Gospel Meeting, Sunday through Friday.