

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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FIVE STEPS TO DESTRUCTION

Jeremiah had been called at a very critical time in the history of Israel and Judah. The Northern Kingdom, Israel, had already been carried away. Isaiah, who prophesied some 700 years before Christ, had warned Israel repeatedly of her sins, yet she would not hear nor take heed.

Jeremiah had been called to be a prophet to the southern tribe of Judah, but he felt ill equipped for the task because of his age (Jer. 1:5, 6). However, Jehovah had other plans indeed, "...Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (Jer. 1:9, 10). Even later in this book Jeremiah's apprehension would shine forth. Fortunately, the drive to preach was stronger than the fear he may have possessed. "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I would not stay" (Jer. 20:9).

The times of Jeremiah were very much like our times. It was a period of wealth and prosperity, yet lacking in, and poor in, spirituality and godliness. In Jeremiah we find a picture of this hellish society as we follow the five steps of destruction outlined by this prophet.

The Word of the Lord was a reproach (Jer. 6:10). In Jeremiah 8:9 we see that "the wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" They were a people who obeyed not the voice of the Lord, nor received correction (Jer. 7:28). It is no wonder they went backward and not forward (Jer. 7:24).

Everyone was given to covetousness (Jer. 6:13). Isaiah would describe the people as "greedy dogs which can never have enough" (Isa. 56:11). We must realize that covetousness is idolatry, and we must beware of it (Col. 3:5; Luke 12:15). Salvation

cannot be purchased with silver or gold (Zeph. 1:18), nor is Jehovah impressed with treasures we accumulate here on earth. We must lay up treasures in heaven as we walk contentedly here (Matt. 6:19-24; Heb. 13:5).

They said, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). They were a people who did not recognize the problems that surrounded them. Many today fail to recognize the problems the church faces. The Bible speaks of false teachers in every time frame. In fact, Peter said, "but there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1). Though we live in a time of blessing, we must also realize that we must beware (Col. 2:8).

They could not blush (Jer. 6:15). Zephaniah said, "The unjust knoweth no shame" (Zeph. 3:5). The fine art of blushing is being lost. Immodesty is becoming the sign of the times, and there seems to be no shame. Wild, rebellious children, and sin going unopposed should be a shame to any people, and yet is the order of the day for many. We need to get back to the purity of God's standard.

They refused to walk in the old paths (Jer. 6:16). There are those who are clamoring for change and for that which is new. However, we must realize that the Bible says now what it said in the beginning. In the area of New Testament Christianity, we must realize that the church and the message are more than 1900 years old. We need to seek the "old paths" of God's Word.

We can learn great lessons from the Old Testament if we will. May we keep those things in mind as we study our Bible much, much, more.

- Don Walker

Religion for Everyday Use

"But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more; and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you; that ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing." (1 Thess. 4:10-12).

True religion can be practiced in work clothes at all hours of the day, any day in the week. It is practical life. It has a place in all work and all play of a legitimate character. It is

something else besides a Sunday face and a Sunday dress. It is not an arbitrary code for polished piety and holiday use.

A truly religious man is one who is doing the will of God. God wills that men be happy and useful. He alone is familiar with the requirements. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." All divine urgings and prohibitions are for man's good for time and eternity. He does not arbitrarily restrict man's happiness. He is good. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). At the time Paul wrote to them, the Thessalonians had only recently turned from idols to God. They had shown notable progress in some of the graces of the Christian life. Paul encouraged them to go on and not become easily satisfied with their attainments, and he instructed them in the practical activities of genuine religion.

A Strange Ambition

Some of his suggestions are surprisingly simple. They do not remind us of thunderstorms and tempests. He advocates a strange ambition: "Study to be quiet." That is, be ambitious, make it your aim to be quiet. Some had misinterpreted the nature of their calling. They were noisy and disorderly. One would think they belonged to the spiritual tribe of Gad instead of the church of Christ, the way they gadded about, idling away their time, gossiping and meddling. They were injuring the cause of true religion. Christians should "lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2-4).

That ambition which is motivated by worldly pride leads to sin and ultimate disappointment. Ananias and Sapphira were seeking notoriety when they were led into the sin of lying against the Holy Spirit. False ambition will make them lie. Pharisees and hypocrites sounded trumpets, prayed long prayers, and dressed peculiarly, "to be seen of men." Christ condemns such conduct among his disciples. They must not "love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the market places, and to be called of men, Rabbi." (Matt. 23: 6-8).

"Study to be quiet." Genuine humility is too scarce among disciples of today. We deserve anew the reproof of James: "My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing; and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool; do ye not make

distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren; did not God choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him? But ye have dishonored the poor man." (James 2:1-6).

It is possible that we make too much ado over certain individuals in our assemblies today for reasons that are out of harmony with the expressed will of God. It is the spirit of the world. It befits "the sound doctrine," "that aged men be temperate, grave, sober-minded, sound in faith, in love, in patience: that aged women likewise be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed: the younger men likewise exhort to be sober-minded." (Titus 2:1-6). This is real religion, and it is real life, too. It is not gaudy or fussy. It is as divinely natural and beautiful as a sunset. The colors of life blend perfectly when men obey God.

This ambition for quiet would have made peace reign where discord and hate brood over the tragedy of disrupted churches. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God." A selfish seeking for notoriety has driven many a schismatic on his destructive course. It explains much of the wild and unreasoning sensationalism in religion. "But foolish and ignorant questionings refuse, knowing that they gender strifes. And the Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle toward all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves." (2 Tim 2: 23-25). Truth is often more like the still small voice than the breaking of the rocks and the rending of the mountains.

Religion in Business

Religion is not idleness. He is far afield who thinks he should be freed from the ordinary demands of life, that he might devote his time to religion. It is a great blessing that most people have to work to live. "If any will not work, neither let him eat." Pity the man who has nothing to do but hold his hands and be pious. The apostle of true religion says: "Do your own business and work with your hands." Did you ever hear of a man who did not have time to be religious? He is like the man who couldn't see the forest for the trees or the city for the houses and people. If he has time for honest work, he has time to be religious. Lord Tennyson defined a living poet as "a reed through which all things blow into music." Another has paraphrased his language and defined a living Christian as "a reed through which all things blow into religion." We can live like the angels when we become as the angels. While we are on earth, it is God's will that we live as men. Religion glows in the activities of a busy, useful life. It is practical enough.

The apostle offers good and sufficient reasons for the practical religion he enjoined upon the Thessalonians. Their idle, fussy, excitable ways were having a bad influence. "Walk becomingly toward them that are without." The church has a character to sustain. It should command the respect of "them that are without." This demands that Christians lead quiet, peaceable lives and attend to business. It is God's will that Christians be thrifty enough to be independent, "have need of nothing." There should also be a surplus to be given for those who are not so fortunate. There may be good reasons for poverty, but it is nothing to boast of. It may be actually disgraceful, considering the good health and opportunities of the pauper. The beauty and practical nature of texts like these explain why the Bible maintains its vigor.

- Cled Wallace, via *Bible Banner*, Jan., 1943

- > Ask your preacher where the Bible says there are many faiths that please God. Compare his answer with Ephesians 4:5!
 - > "If as a Christian, you are too busy to pray, you are too busy!"
 - > "A mule can't kick while he's pulling and can't pull while he's kicking!"
 - > "Hypocrites claim to really be concerned and care while taking advantage of others!"
 - > "All people make mistakes; that's why they put erasers on pencils!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Lord, Help Me Learn to Forgive!*" (Text: Matt. 6:14-15); Sunday evening: Why Believe the Bible? *The Problem of Unbelief*, p. 70.

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)