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July 2017 “ERROR IS INCREASING”

Dear Friends,

Some of the strongest - and most terrifying - warnings in the Bible that God has given to Christians are found in the book of Hebrews:

⁴For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, ⁵And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, ⁶If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. ⁷For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: ⁸But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. (Hebrews 6:4-8)

²⁶For if we sin willfully {willingly choose to live with sin in our lives} after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, ²⁷But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. ²⁸He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: ²⁹Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:26-31)

Having been raised in a church which taught eternal security, (once saved, always saved), I don't recall the passages above ever being taught. When God says it is possible for a Christian to walk so far away from Him that it is impossible to renew that person again unto repentance, He means exactly what He says. Furthermore, He makes it very clear that Christians who willingly live with sin in their lives are facing “fiery indignation,” the same eternal judgment that shall be passed upon His “adversaries” [hupenantios - contrary, adverse; opposers (unto God)].

The obvious question is: How could such a thing happen? How could a Christian allow himself to arrive at a place where he falls away from Jesus or believes that willingly choosing sin would go unpunished before God? I can tell you, it doesn't happen overnight; it is a lengthy process that can take months or even years. But how does it get started? God helps us understand this process in scripture.

¹³(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. ¹⁴For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: ¹⁵Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their

***conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)* (Romans 2:13-15)**

The Gentiles never had the Law of Moses as did the Jews. Thus, they had never been taught such things as, “Thou shalt not steal,” or, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” or, “Thou shalt not covet.” However, when the Gentiles accepted Jesus as Savior, the born again experience brought with it a nature created in God’s righteousness and true holiness. Thus, the “law” of God’s holy standards lived in the nature of the born again Gentiles. That nature has a conscience which convicts Christians of not only the actions of sin, but the very thoughts which lead to the actions. Thus, there is a sense of guilt in a Believer for simply meditating on or considering sin long before there is an action of sin.

In order for a Christian to fall away (Hebrews 6:6) or willingly continue in sin, something has to be done about the convicting work of the conscience of our born again nature. A Believer lives with an ongoing struggle with it or continually suppresses and ignores the conviction. This is what the apostle Paul describes in his first letter to Timothy.

¹Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ²Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:1-2)

The phrase “seared with a hot iron” gives the image of cauterizing, or placing a piece of extremely hot metal to a wound. Such cauterizing stops the bleeding, but it also deadens the nerves around the wound. In this verse, the wound is the “pain” of conviction coming from the conscience of a Christian’s new nature. But notice that the hot iron doing the searing is doctrine. What kind of doctrine would sear the conscience of the born again spirit? A doctrine which accommodates fleshly and emotional desires that the Bible condemns, declaring that those desires are not sin or that God’s grace relieves the Believer from accountability for such sin.

This leads to another question: How could a Christian get caught up in such doctrinal error? Once again, the apostle Paul gives us the answer.

³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts {fleshly and emotional desires the Bible condemns and identifies as sin} shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Every single Christian faces the temptation of fleshly and emotional desires the Bible condemns and identifies as sin. Temptation itself is not sin; but if I allow myself to desire the fulfillment of that temptation, let alone act on that desire, I am now guilty of sin. Jesus even said that if I look at a woman with lust, I have committed adultery with her in my heart (Matthew 5:27-28). As a child of God, it is my responsibility to cast down those imaginations that oppose His nature in me before they become sin (2 Corinthians 10:5). However, if I yield my ear to the teachings of people who preach the fable of a compromising doctrine, I have begun the process of searing the conscience of my born again nature.

Earlier, I mentioned that this falling away of willingly giving way to sin is a lengthy process and take months or even years. This process is illustrated by what is written in the Psalms.

¹Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. (Psalm 1:1)

Using familiar imagery, we have a Christian who is out for his daily walk and passes by a church with its doors and windows open. The pastor is preaching a message which implies that certain actions are not really sin and that God's grace requires no remorse for such behavior, using scripture (out of context, of course) to prove his point. The more he walks by, the more he listens. As the weeks go by, he eventually begins walking more slowly past this church so he can hear more of what is being taught. The hot iron has now been applied to his conscience.

After three or four months, this person actually walks up to the open door and stands there for the entire sermon. The more he listens, the more he is intrigued by what he is hearing. He starts feeling as though the message of holy living he has been hearing at his own church is an unscriptural message of legalism and condemnation. More and more he becomes convinced that God loves him no matter what (which is true) and that God would never interfere with the happiness of His children, especially if that happiness includes behavior his current pastor declares God forbids. The hot iron is being pressed deeper into his conscience.

As time passes, this person notices that the church he's been standing outside is growing much faster than his own church. The people seem so happy and excited to be there. More and more activities are posted on the church's large, colorful, electronic sign. The songs are lively and the praise team sounds like a group of professional singers and musicians. Simply put, this church seems to be doing more of what God wants and reaching more people than his own church.

Then, the day comes that he actually walks into the church and sits in the congregation for an entire service. The more he attends, the more he likes what he sees and "feels." He is invited to some home fellowships where alcohol is available. At a church function he meets a lady who shares his love for the Lord; after a couple of dates, they "partake of each other's passions." By now, the hot iron has seared the conscience of this man's born again spirit and he feels no conviction or guilt over his behavior. He claims to love the Lord, but that love is now superficial. Furthermore, he considers his former church to be sadly deceived, with the people being manipulated and controlled by modern-day Pharisees. The heartbreaking reality is that it may be impossible for this person to ever be restored unto God.

In His scathing rebuke of the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus said, "**Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?**" (Matthew 23:33). I do not doubt that when He said that, there was a collective gasp among the people: Here was Jesus, essentially telling some of the respected and revered Jewish leaders they were going to Hell! These were men who dutifully offered sacrifices, attended the required feasts, gave all required tithes and offerings, and could quote the Law word-for-word. But in spite of their faithfulness to "attend church" and their professed love for and dedication to God, over time they had embraced doctrines that actually led them away from God. This is precisely what is happening in the Church today.

In the example of our "walking-standing-sitting" Christian, the doctrine he heard was promising him greater freedom in Christ. The problem is that those preaching this doctrine are actually slaves of corruption who have had their own conscience seared (see 2 Peter 2:18-22). It is a classic example of the blind leading the blind. While it will be impossible to renew many of these people unto repentance, there is a way we can protect ourselves from such a fall.

¹ Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. ³ And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. (Psalm 1:1-3)

MEDITATION God is making it clear that we guard our hearts from devilish, conscience-searing doctrines by first making a decision that we will delight ourselves in God's Word. This is a decision we must make on our own; God will not force it on us. It requires diligence to meditate in His Word and to establish it as a priority in our lives. Though we aren't always in a situation where we're able to read the Bible, we can often listen to it during those times. In fact, as I am writing this letter, I am listening to an audio version of the New Testament (I also listen to the Bible as I'm driving).

CONTEXT Along with this, it is critical that we leave scripture in context as we meditate. In Isaiah 28:10, God declares that in order for us to be established in doctrine, His Word must be studied line-upon-line and precept-upon-precept. Skipping through chapters and removing verses from their setting is the quickest way to develop conscience-searing doctrine.

THE HOLY SPIRIT Along with meditating in God's Word and leaving scripture in context, it is absolutely critical that we spend time praying in the Spirit. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would teach us all things and guide us into all truth (John 14:26 and John 16:13). As we pray in tongues, the Holy Spirit works in us to bring understanding of the scripture we meditate. This is part of what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote that we are speaking mysteries when we speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:2).

[NOTE: For a more in-depth teaching on meditating scripture, please download my teaching series, "Meditation Produces Transformation," available for no charge at www.jmmgrace.com.]

CONTEXTUAL TEACHERS The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). He also told the Philippians to follow him and others who are established in truth (Philippians 3:17). Jesus established teachers in His Church for a reason (Ephesians 4:11-16). The more you meditate in God's Word, leave scripture in context and pray in the Spirit, the easier it will be to identify teachers who do not fragment scripture in their sermons. As Christians, we **NEED** teachers who leave God's Word in context and lead us on the narrow path of truth.

More and more, I am hearing of churches, pastors and Christians yielding over to conscience-searing doctrine. Over and over I am reading statements by Christians endorsing what God in His Word clearly defines as sin. Sadly, these things are only going to increase the closer we get to the return of Jesus. We must guard our hearts, stand strong, endure to the end and we will be ready for Jesus' return!

In His Grace,

Jim Martin

P.S. - I have a sermon that fits perfectly with the teaching in this letter. It's titled, "Profitable Doctrine" and is available on CD at no charge. Order your copy using the form on the next page.

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IT'S TIME FOR THE KENYA SPIRITUAL EQUIPPING SEMINAR!

Monday, July 24 through Friday, July 28, 2017
Gethsemane Church, Kimaiga Estate, Migori Town
Class Sessions: 10:00 AM, 11:15 AM, 2:15 PM and 3:30 PM
(Lunch will be provided.)

Sponsored by Grace Ministries Bible College, this seminar will be conducted like a college course providing in-depth, line-upon-line Biblical teaching confirming foundational doctrine for effective discipleship. There will be no charge to register or attend and you do not need a special invitation. For more information or to register, please call Pastor Tom Adede, +254709749727

Finances can be a great challenge in Kenya so our ministry intends to pay all the conference expenses. First and foremost, we ask for your prayers over this conference; it is going to be a major turning point in the lives of those attending. Also, if you would like to contribute toward this missions project, checks/money orders may be sent to Grace Christian Center, PO Box 291962, Dayton, Ohio 45429. You may also give via PayPal by visiting www.jmmgrace.com and clicking on the "Donations" link in the yellow box. Thank you so much in advance for your partnership in this outreach.

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