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October 2023 “Are You Condemning Yourself?”

Dear Friend,

As I press deeper into God, He has not only shown me what He sees in my life and ministry, but He has increasingly revealed to me the shocking levels of compromise in the Body of Christ. It is very unsettling to see how many Christians and church leaders seem to have no concern whatsoever about sin making inroads into the lifestyles of those who profess Jesus as Savior. It's as though they don't think their behavior is relevant to their Christian life.

One reason this has happened at such an alarming rate is because too many Christians do not seem to think the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. They dismiss the manner in which God dealt with rebellion and sin in the lives of His people in the Old Testament as though it does not apply to New Testament Believers. Such an attitude reveals that people do not know God or the Bible the way they profess. In no uncertain terms, God has explained in First Corinthians chapter ten that judgment for sin recorded in the Old Testament is a warning to Christians that He still judges sin today. You simply can't try to hide sin behind the blood of Jesus and the grace of God.

But there is another aspect to this compromise which is equally concerning: It is the refusal of church leaders to call sin what is and to warn church members of God's impending and inescapable judgment. God is very blunt in His prophetic warning to all church leaders, no matter what their title, when it comes to how they deliver His Word to their congregations.

¹Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ²Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them,

When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: ³If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; ⁴Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. ⁵He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

⁶But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

⁷So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. ⁸When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. ⁹Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. (Ezekiel 33:1-9)

The sword God speaks of in this passage is not simply an invasion by the army of another nation. The sword is the judgment of God for sin. A watchman is a person who not only knows that judgment is coming, but why it is coming. God is warning the watchmen that if they do not “blow the trumpet” (warn the people of their sin and the judgment for sin), God will hold them accountable for the blood of the rebellious. But if they do blow the trumpet, and people continue in their sin, the watchmen will not be held accountable for their blood.

This prophecy should strike a holy terror in the hearts of today’s watchmen. Who are the watchmen of today? Those God has called to the ministry of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. Out of those five ministry callings, the pastor would be at the forefront. Why? Because the pastor has the oversight of a local congregation on a continual, week in and week out basis.

The Old Testament Hebrew word for pastor is *rā’āh*, and the New Testament Greek word is *poimén*; both mean a shepherd, and keeper or overseer of a flock. In 1 Peter 5:4, Jesus is referred to as the Chief Shepherd, which comes from the Greek word *archipoímēn*: *archi*, meaning above, highest ranking, and *poimen*, meaning shepherd. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd over the sheep of God’s pasture (the Body of Christ); pastors could be called the undershepherds having the responsibility to oversee a local gathering of God’s sheep. Pastors have the responsibility to feed God’s sheep from the table of the Lord with His Word and truth (Jeremiah 3:15). This responsibility is not only on the pastor, but also on all those the pastor allows to speak from the church’s pulpit.

I don’t know of a pastor who does not have access to a Bible. The Bible is the truth of God and the will of God. In it, He gives a revelation of His expectations for the manner in which Christians are supposed to live. He identifies sin in no uncertain terms, and He does this in more than one passage. In Romans chapters one, two, and thirteen, 1 Corinthians chapters five and six, Galatians chapter five, Ephesians chapter five, Hebrews chapter ten, 2 Peter chapter two, Jude, and Revelation chapters two and three, God makes it explicitly clear that all of the following are considered sin (this list is but a sampling):

- Drunkenness and the use of other substances to impact mental faculties.
- Adultery (a married person being physically intimate with someone other than the spouse).
- Fornication (unmarried people participating in physical intimacy of any kind, including living together).
- Men presenting themselves as women.
- Women presenting themselves as men.
- Murder (which includes abortion).
- Men having any kind of physical intimacy with another man.
- Women having any kind of physical intimacy with another woman.
- Any involvement with softcore or hardcore pornography.
- Teaching what God has called sin is not actually sin.
- Corrupting the Word of God to present a lie as being truth.

Not only does God call all of the above (and more) as being sin, He further declares that Christians who choose to incorporate any such behaviors into their lifestyle will be destined for an eternity in Hell.

²⁶For if we sin willfully 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? (Hebrews 10:26-29)

¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

(Galatians 5:19-21)

That is bad enough, but it is even worse for those in church leadership positions who teach that such sin is already covered by the blood of Jesus and should be of no concern for the Believer, that God understands how we are, loving and openly accepting us no matter what. Those who teach such blasphemy and abominations are headed for severe judgment and damnation.

¹⁸For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. ¹⁹While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. ²⁰For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. ²¹For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. ²²But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

(2 Peter 2:18-22)

¹My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. ²For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. ³Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. ⁴Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. ⁵Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. ⁷For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: ⁸But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. ¹⁰Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to

be. ¹¹Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? ¹²Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. (James 3:1-12)

Masters (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers) have the ability to control the direction of the Body (those who are born again) through what they declare from pulpits. As watchmen to the Body of Christ, they have the God-mandated responsibility to not only identify sin, but to sound the trumpet of impending judgment for those who are engaging in sin. But when they begin teaching a compromising gospel of twisted grace, they become the very people the Apostle Paul warned about in his letter to the Galatians: those who are perverting the gospel of Christ, preaching an altered message that bewitches the hearers and leads them away from the truth. God says those ministers will be accursed (Galatians 1:6-7, 3:1) The word accursed in Galatians 1:8, 9 comes from the Greek word anathema and it means they will be estranged from Christ and salvation for all eternity, sentenced to damnation in the lake of fire.

Many of you may be aware that the United Methodist denomination has decided to approve of sexual behavior God calls an abomination. Men and women involved in same sex relationships and marriages are being ordained and appointed to the position of pastor in many of the UM churches. Not long ago in a UM church located in Cincinnati, Ohio, a small number of young adults approached their pastor and asked him his position on the subject and in what direction their church was going. In response, he presented the matter to the congregation for a vote: should the church go along with the denomination's liberal agenda, or should the church stay true to the Word of God? The result was that 96% of the congregation voted to stay true to the Word of God. That is extremely encouraging; however, why in the world would any pastor need a congregation to vote on whether or not to approve of sin?

Some reading this may be thinking, "Well, I'm not an Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor or Teacher, so I'm not in any danger." Do not believe that lie! If you attend a church rife with compromise where the leadership delivers teaching that is a mixture of scriptural truth and blasphemous error, you are just as guilty. Your attendance is an endorsement of teaching that will lead people to Hell, *even if you disagree with what is taught*. People who know you attend such a church will logically assume you are in agreement with the doctrine of that church. Furthermore, if you are supporting that church financially, it's as though you are paying the pastor to lie to you and others. How foolish! Would you pay a doctor to poison your body? Then why would you pay a preacher to poison your spirit and soul? God leaves nothing to speculation concerning what His children are to do in such situations: get out of those churches!

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. (Romans 16:17)

⁶Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. ¹⁴And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14)

³If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; ⁴He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof

cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, ⁵Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. (1 Timothy 6:3-5)

*¹⁰A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; ¹¹Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.
(Titus 3:10-11)*

God also lets us know what we can do to help guard ourselves against deception: (1) Develop a lifestyle of consistently sowing His Word into our lives (Psalm 119:130), (2) Praying in the Holy Spirit, who teaches us all things and guides us into all truth (John 14:26, 16:13), and (3) Only listen to those who stay true to scripture in their teachings (Philippians 3:17). If you would like to learn more about guarding yourself against false doctrine, use the order form below to request a CD of my sermon, *Take Heed That No Man Deceives You*.

As Christians, we cannot take a casual approach to sin. We cannot allow the doctrines of man to define sin. We cannot try and justify sin by discrediting our ability to overcome all sin by the power of God's life in us. We must do as Jesus commanded, and that is to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). We can do all things through Christ which strengthens us, and that includes living a life of holiness before our Father.

In His Grace,

Jim

_____ Please a CD of the sermon, *Take Heed That No Man Deceives You*.

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