

LENEXA EDIFIER

“and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32)

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HOW UGLY IS INFIDELITY?

Jim Stauffer

We have all known people, even close friends whose marriage has ended due to the unfaithfulness of one of the parties. Generally we were shocked when we learned of it and among friends, shared our surprise and disappointment. It brings ugly scenes to our mind as we think of our friends and their relationship in a new, different and even disgusting way.

God expresses His feelings toward unfaithfulness to Him in just such language by the prophet Ezekiel as He speaks of the infidelity of Israel and Judah to Him. Before we view and analyze what He says about them, let us be reminded of two passages that tell us the value of the Old Testament Scriptures to us today. *For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4) Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. (1 Corinthians 10:6)* The point is if we listen carefully to the message we can conduct ourselves in a way that leads to hope eternally rather than following their evil ways and suffering from the wrath of God.

In **Ezekiel 23**, the prophet is given the names of Oholah and Oholibah to illustrate the conduct of Israel and Judah as they rejected God and served idols like the nations around them. He says they played the harlot in Egypt and with the Assyrians and Babylonians. These nations are depicted as lustful women, desirous of strange men as they pursued idolatry while rejecting the worship and honor they were to devote to the Lord.

Ezekiel reveals to us God's wrath was delivered in that Israel was conquered and taken captive by Assyria as was Judah by Babylon.

When we turn our back on the genuine love God has granted us in the redemption and reconciliation through

His Son, Jesus, we are disgusting in His sight. He has paid such a price for us because He loves us so, but He cannot and will not endure our infidelity. Therefore, as He condemned both Israel and Judah, we are to learn He will also condemn us. We will be thrown out as the worthless slave of **Matthew 25:30**, *into outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. Are we the kind of person who will turn his back on the One Who loved Him so?

“You Better Watch Out!”

by Dee Bowman

It didn't take any time at all to know where that came from, did it? If you grew up in this country and know anything about the season of the year we call “Christmas,” you know that lyric by heart. Gene Autry wrote it. Right? Well, sort of.

I was thinking about this the other night and I thought what kind of significance there is to that enjoinder, not just at Christmas time, but all year long. In fact, all life long. “You better watch out!” Good advice.

Let me take you to the Bible to look at some of the imperatives assigned there and the reasons for them.

First one that comes to mind is in **I Peter 5:8**: *“Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* The word vigilant here is a Greek word which means “be watchful,” or “be on guard.” What it says is “you better watch out.” The advice is as needed today as it was before Peter's pen dried from having written it. The devil is still as active as ever, still has his clever ways, is still as wily as in the first record we have on him in the garden with mother Eve. He never sleeps and he only retires from the battle long enough to develop some new strategy and attack with a renewed ferocity. So, at the very beginning, it's necessary that we recognize him as the enemy and be watching for him. You better watch out.

I'll tell you how clever he is. He can even disguise himself as "*an angel of light*" (II Cor. 11:14) Can you believe that? He can make himself seem to be someone who is a messenger of good stuff. Think about that. That's how clever he is. Now, that means that we have to be especially watchful, because he can deceive us and lead us somewhere we ought not go, all the while making us feel like it's good to go there.

Need I remind you, too, that vigilance is a planned activity? You have to be aware of his various disguises and be able to recognize his different kinds of appeals and be ready to do something about it. The best way I know to do that is to have a strong connection to the Word of God. "*But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer...*" (I Pet. 3:15) When you apply His Word to anything or anybody, it reveals the real person or the real thing. It contains both descriptions of the enemy and plans for overcoming his various ploys.

And vigilance requires consistent alertness; there's no time to relax, no time when you can look away or neglect to note his whereabouts. Few people surrender to this enemy; mostly, they are captured because of neglect. They just aren't looking, so they don't see him coming.

Elders are special watchmen. Having warned the Elders of impending disaster from men "*who shall arise, from among yourselves, speaking perverse things do draw away disciples after them,*" Paul said to the Ephesian elders. "*Therefore watch...*" (Acts 20:31). Elders are said to be those who "*watch for our souls*" (Heb. 13:17). Their two primary responsibilities are to 1) tend the flock, and 2) watch for their souls. They should receive our sincere appreciation for such diligence and care for our eternal welfare.

Paul told the Corinthians "*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men*" (I Cor. 16:13) It seems to me that there is a sequence in this warning. By that, I mean that the first results in the second, the second in the third. If we begin by watching (and that begins, as we said, with a close connection to the Word of God), then, by faith, we can stand fast when the time comes. Then, because of both those things, we will be disinclined to give up easily, in fact, we just won't quit. That's how men quit. They don't.

"Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (I Thess. 5:6) There is no time

when we can let down our guard. We dare not sleep, lest we be found vulnerable and fall—and not only fall ourselves, but allow the enemy to penetrate our ranks so that others fall as well. Paul concludes, "*But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation*" (I Thess 5:8) It's not enough to just sort of look around, there has to be a deliberate seriousness about the matter at hand. All that is part of being a watchman.

In Matt. 25:13, after having painted a disturbing picture of the coming judgement, and warning us of its inevitability and individuality, Jesus concludes by saying, "*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*" The vigilance brethren, must be continual. There can be no letting down, no lapsing into indifference, no apathy, no inattention. We dare not forget the seriousness of watching cautiously; our eternal destiny is at stake. And so, we better, Watch Where we're going. Watch Who we're with. Watch What we say and How we say it. Watch our Priorities. Watch our Attitudes.

I suppose I could sum all this up by saying, "You better watch out!" Me, too.

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH" #4

The church Christ built is in harmony with God's purposes and plans (Matthew 16:18). The church is ruled by divine authority (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:18-23). Whatever the church is and does, Christ willed it. The only sure foundation is Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:20).

God has given a divine plan for accomplishing His purposes. Ephesians 4:11 says: "*And he gave some (to be) apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.*" The work of revelation was accomplished by the apostles and prophets (Acts 1:15-22; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Acts 11:27-30; Ephesians 2:20); their influence continues through their completed work; it remains a perfect and complete guide. Jude 3 says: "*Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you for our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto-the saints.*" New Testament evangelists traveled about preaching the word; sometimes they stayed in one area for a longer time (1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 4:2-5). Pastors were those

mature godly men, who met the qualifications of God (**1 Timothy 3**); they then took the oversight of local congregations and watched after the sheep. As *"all truth"* was being revealed teachers were needed; some teachers had miraculous knowledge (**John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29**). Why did Christ give these gifts unto men? **Ephesians 4:12**: *"For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ."* Men need to be equipped spiritually to serve and minister; every Christian must be involved so the body will be strengthened, spiritually and numerically. We are striving for a mature faith in Christ. *"Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"* (**Ephesians 4:13**).

Institutionalism perverts and thwarts the purposes and plans that God reveals in His word. Christianity seeks the reformation of man from within, not from without (**1 Corinthians 7:20-22**). The Lord never intended a social gospel or a social religion. Yes, some New Testament Christians fail to show hospitality; they do not provide wholesome entertainment for their children. It still is true that the home not the church is to be the center of social activity (**1 Corinthians 11:20-22**). Fellowship halls, fellowship banquets, etc., are simply diversions away from the true intent and nature of the Lord's church. Likewise, regardless of the good accomplished, carnal appeals are merely symptoms of a much deeper problem, namely, a failure to understand and properly appreciate the true mission of the church of Christ.

The church is not a business in business to make money. It is not a courtroom; its purpose is not domestic relationships. Yes, the gospel will answer the needs of all, but many a church has gotten sidetracked by attempting to be a professional counseling center for divided homes and the people in them. Secular business is not the business of the church. While civil government is ordained by the Lord (**Romans 13:1-7**), political issues do not belong in the church. Let the church be faithful to the divine mission as given God. Let the church be the church and let God have all the glory.

Randy Harshbarger

Superficial Standards

Joshua Welch

King Saul, Israel's first king, was "handsome" and tall and looked kingly. Yet, he did not act like God's king. Later, God would anoint a shepherd boy, David, and say, *"Do not look at his appearance or his physical stature...for the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"* (**1 Samuel 16:7**). It's not that David was ugly, but God chose him on the basis of his "heart" and not on the basis of his looks, his pedigree, or his seniority in the family (he had older brothers). David was far more successful than Saul and one of the keys to his success was he was *"a man after God's own heart"* (**1 Samuel 13:14**).

Sometimes single folks date someone because they are beautiful or rich. We love to hear people say we "look like a cute couple." But, really, how shallow if looks are the only thing that make us attractive! Proverbs warns the young man, *"As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion"* (**11:22**). We need to look deeper than a person's flesh and wallet or purse before we commit to a lifetime. Samson could be the Bible's "Exhibit A" of the foolishness of looking at a person's face without considering their faith (**Judges 14:1-3**). As **Proverbs 15:16** says, *"Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble."* Think about the heart.

Sometimes we search for a preacher on the basis of his looks, his family, his eloquence, his flashy style. Yet, these are never standards of success for God's soldiers. Timothy was told to look for *"faithful men who will be able to teach others also"* (**2 Timothy 2:2**). God wants his preachers to have hearts filled with His word, inflamed to share it, and doing so with love. What do his actions say about his heart? Quit looking for just a "pulpit guy" who plays golf every day and look for someone who greets the visitors warmly, takes time to talk to the kids, makes time for the widow, and sacrifices to serve others. Jesus did not tell his disciples the key to preaching success was in tailored suits, Toastmasters clubs, and their preaching prowess. He said, *"whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant"* (**Matthew 20:26**).

Let's be careful to avoid creating superficial standards for those who will serve important roles in our lives. Are we looking through God's eyes as we see others?

Psa. 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

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Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship
Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship
Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10