

Is the Historic Coming Storm More Than a Physical One?

While the East Coast braces for what *USA Today* calls a “historic storm,” an op-ed in this morning’s *New York Times* warns that our nuclear weapons are vulnerable to cyberwarfare. Meanwhile, *The Wall Street Journal* reports that synagogues across America are ramping up security in the face of continued bomb threats.

Some sins are so public that they generate headlines. Others, less so.

I was walking in our neighborhood early yesterday morning and watched a driver pull up to a four-way stop sign, slow down slightly to see that there were no other cars or people in the way, then speed through the intersection. For the rest of my walk, I considered the theological implications of what I had just witnessed.

Here’s why: My neighbor’s decision represents precisely the kind of temptation that most plagues people who read an article such as this one.

We know that public sin dishonors God, ruins our witness and harms everyone it affects. My neighbor would no doubt have come to a legal stop if there had been other drivers or people in the intersection.

But private sins known to no one but God, choices for which we cannot see significant negative consequences, are another matter. Judgmental thoughts not verbalized, greed or lust or jealousy or anger not acted upon—these are temptations we think we can indulge. Only God knows, and we can confess them to him and be forgiven without cost. Or so we think.

Here’s why we’re wrong.

One: Private sin never stays private. More people know than we know. Even if they don't know what is wrong, they know something is wrong. The driver who ran the stop sign had no idea his/her private sin would be the subject of my public blog today. "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23b).

Two: Unchecked sin always grows. Drug users soon discover that they need more drugs for the same high. One reason marijuana is so dangerous is that it's a gateway to cocaine and heroin. The driver who runs a stop sign without consequence is likely to run a stoplight next, then a railroad crossing. "Then, when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and when sin is finished, it brings forth death" (James 1:15).

Three: Sin grieves our Holy Father. You and I have no way to comprehend the degree to which our sin hurts God. When the Lord saw the wickedness of humanity, "it grieved Him in his heart" (Gen. 6:6). We are warned, "But you did not learn about Christ in this manner" (Eph. 4:20). What would your mother or father think if they saw your private sins? Your Father feels the same way to a degree we cannot begin to understand.

Four: Sin replaces good with evil. Every moment we spend in sin is a moment lost to righteousness. Even when we confess our sins and receive God's gracious forgiveness (1 John 1:9), the reward for good that we would have received in this life and the next is gone forever.

As the only salt and light in our fallen world (Matt. 5:13-16), we owe it to our culture and to our Father to seek the holiness only the Holy Spirit can produce. Jeremy Taylor noted that "no grain of sand is small in the mechanism of a watch." Or in the soul.

How is yours today? {eoa}