

Beware: A Prophetic Warning for the End-Time Church

Beware. It's prophetic word of warning to be on your guard; a verbal alert that danger lies ahead. But are modern-day Christians bearing in mind the Scriptural admonishment to "beware" in these last days?

Current news headlines warn us to beware of the stock market; to beware of partisan politicians; to beware of Muslim extremists and so on, and so on, and so on. To be sure, society offers us so many ominous cautions that it's easy to see how men's hearts could fail them for fear as a sinful world waxes worse and worse (Luke 21:26).

Although godless fear mongers often issue notices to "beware" that are motivated by greed and power, there is wisdom in warnings that originate from a pure and godly source. And the New Testament is full of such red alerts. Beloved, there are flashing sirens throughout the Word of God to warn us of danger all around—but the first place we need to look is within our own hearts.

Listen, much is written about the Beatitudes, as well it should be. (The Beatitudes are the foundation of kingdom living.) But the Bible also warns us to "walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16). Walking circumspectly means to consider all circumstances and possible consequences. So when the Bible says to "beware," we should abandon our pride and receive the word.

Essentially, the circumspect Christian is the prudent Christian. And the prudent Christian is the wise Christian. Not wise in our own opinions. Rather, wise in what is good and simple concerning evil (Romans 16:19). Remember, God will

destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent (1 Cor. 1:19). We are only wise in Christ (1 Cor. 4:10).

Wasn't it King Solomon, after all, who at the end of his life—a journey marked by great wisdom and great sin—concluded that man's whole duty is to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecc. 12:13)?

Again, there are plenty of commandments to "beware" in the New Testament. So I ask you: Are you taking those commandments to heart? Are you walking circumspectly with regard to the prophetic warnings from the apostles, and from Jesus Himself, in your daily life? Let's review some of those commands to "beware" before we answer.

Jesus said, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Saducees" (Matt. 16:6). This warning still echoes in my mind today. We must remain vigilant against snobbish, hypocritical doctrine that prevents people from entering the kingdom. The fields are white and ready for harvest, yet the spirit of religion is slamming its legalistic door in the face of lost souls and new believers alike.

Jesus issued eight "woes" to the religious leaders of His day. Like Joyce Meyer has often said, "I don't know what woe is, but I don't want any of it!" Examine your heart and ask God to show you if you are walking in the letter of the law that kills rather than the spirit that gives life (2 Cor. 3:6).

Jesus also warned to "beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). The Bible cautions us not to keep company with a believer who is covetous (1 Cor. 5:11) and makes it clear that the covetous will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:10; Eph. 5:5). Paul commanded us by the Spirit of God to put to death any covetousness in our members (Col. 3:5). We should be

content with what we have (Heb. 13:5). Covetousness comes out of the heart (Mark 7:21). Examine your heart and ask God to show you if there be any covetousness there.

The Bible also offers strong warning against strife. Paul warns, "But if you bite and devour one another [in partisan strife], be careful that you [and your whole fellowship] are not consumed by one another" (Gal. 5:15, AMP). When there was strife between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot, the elder was wise enough to separate himself from it.

Proverbs also has plenty to say about strife. Partisan strife in the church is no better than partisan strife in politics—in fact it's much worse. "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16, KJV). There's no place for strife in the church of Jesus Christ. Examine your heart for signs of strife, such as competition, resistance and sarcasm.

Paul's wisdom led to another sober warning: "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col. 2:8, NKJV). This follows an admonishment to live in Christ—to do what the Bible teaches line upon line and precept upon precept.

In other words, be a doer of the Word. James warns that if we hear the Word and don't do it, we've deceived ourselves (James 1:22). How much easier is it for a false prophet or false apostle to make merchandise of you if you've already deceived yourself? Examine your heart.

The writer of Hebrews chimed in with a solemn warning to the church: "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). And finally, Peter issued a warning with eternal implications when he wrote in 2 Peter 3:17: "You therefore,

beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away in the error of the wicked.”

These and other calls to “beware” recorded in the Bible were relevant on the day they were spoken and written. But they were also prophetic. How much more are these cautions needed in today’s times, when the spirit of religion is rising, covetousness is woven into a Babylonian society, strife is dividing the Church along denominational lines and worse?

The bottom line: We need to guard our hearts with all diligence for out it flow the issues of life. So, beloved, beware. Examine your heart. And if you find these tendencies within you, repent and walk in Christ.

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