

SABBATH THOUGHT 2024-03-23—HOW MANY WILL DIE?

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Jesus Christ gave three very serious warnings about things that lead to the loss of salvation. Everyone who has even a rudimentary knowledge of Scripture is familiar with them. As a result, one might think that His warnings of eternal death would prompt believers to meditate long and hard about such matters, but it appears they are largely ignored. Hopefully, that is just my perception. The first warning is contained within a PRAYER of Jesus Christ:

MATTHEW 6:9-13 “In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And **forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.** 13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

To emphasize verse 12, Jesus said this immediately afterwards:

MATTHEW 6:14-15 “For **if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.** 15 “But **if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

In verse 12, the Greek word for *debts* means something that is *owed*. The prayer is clearly referring to both debts we owe and debts that others owe us. These are in the context of asking GOD to forgive them ONLY AS we forgive those who are indebted to us. But when Jesus expounded on this in verse 14, He uses *trespass*, a Greek word that means *fault*, *trespass*, or *transgression* in the context of forgiveness BETWEEN people. Trespasses are obviously offenses between people. From GOD’S perspective, offenses are a case where one person OWES something to another person; that is, an offense results in a debt between people. Before GOD, those debts are SIN against Him regardless of whether it is the offender or the victim. And God only forgives our debts (our part in an offense) if we forgive the offenses of others against us. Mark explained it this way:

MARK 11:25-26 “And whenever you stand praying, **if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses [offenses].** 26 “But **if you do not forgive [others who offend you], neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses [offenses].**”

Make no mistake—refusing to repent to a victim OR withholding forgiveness to the offender who sincerely repents can have serious consequences. Reconciliation, which requires the offender repenting to the victim and the victim forgiving the offender, is a HUGE issue among believers. I cannot think of any other problem among God’s people that is so universally ignored even though it is a MAJOR theme throughout the Bible. Notice this small sampling about reconciliation¹:

¹ Also Matt. 5:21-24; 18:21-35.

EPHESIANS 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**

COLOSSIANS 3:12-13 Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 **bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.**

NOTE: While the whole topic of reconciliation cannot be covered in this article, the booklet "[Offenses, Ordinances of God](#)" on the website contains a full discussion.

But the problem goes deeper. Notice this warning:

MATTHEW 7:1-2 "**Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.**"

Jesus' admonition may sound like He is continuing to address offenses, but judgment goes *beyond* the offense. Judgment means to try, condemn, and punish. It is a common response to an offense of either or both the offender and victim, but bystanders can judge others even if they were not directly involved in the offense. How does judgment come into it? It happens when an offender says something like, "The victim got what was coming to them," or the victim says, "I hope God punishes the offender." In the case of bystanders, they judge others when they take sides and show resentment, anger, or malice toward either the offender or victim. Read what James said about ANYONE who judges (tries, condemns, punishes) and, without a doubt, he does not mince words:

JAMES 2:4 have you not shown **partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?**

JAMES 2:13 For **judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.** Mercy triumphs over judgment.

JAMES 4:11-12 **Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.** 12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. **Who are you to judge another?**

Offenses are the cause of many (most?) serious problems within the Body of Christ. Unreconciled offenses usually involve judgment as well. But they are made much worse when bystanders get involved because they, too, judge those involved. Those who side with the victim only make it more difficult for the victim to forgive when bystanders condemn the offender and it is hard enough for an offender to repent to the victim without others justifying the offense. But there is a reward for reconciling offenses and putting aside judgment: we regain a BROTHER or SISTER²!

² Matt. 18:15.

The third serious warning of Jesus Christ that can lead to the loss of salvation is refusing to do good works. Paul describes good works as an administrative service³ of Giving & Receiving. Read this wonderful passage:

2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-15 Now **concerning the ministering to the saints**, it is superfluous for me to write to you; 2 for I know your willingness **[to give to others]**, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. 3 Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready **[to give to others]**; 4 lest if *some* Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. 5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift **[given to others]** beforehand, which *you had* previously promised, that it may be ready as *a matter of* generosity and not as a grudging obligation. 6 But this I say: **He who sows **[gives]** sparingly will also reap **[receive]** sparingly, and he who sows **[gives]** bountifully will also reap **[receive]** bountifully. 7 So let each one **give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.** 8 **And God is able to make all grace abound toward you **[received from God]**, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance **[to give]** for every good work.** 9 As it is written: “He has dispersed abroad **[received from God]**, He has **given** to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.” 10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower **[received from God]**, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown **[given to people]** and increase the fruits of your righteousness **[received from God]**, 11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanks**giving** through us to God. 12 **For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints **[giving]**, but also is abounding **[receiving]**** through many thanks**givings** to God, 13 while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal sharing **[giving TO them]** with them and all *men*, 14 and by their prayer for you **[receiving FROM them]**, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks *be* to God for **His indescribable gift!****

Giving and receiving are all about good works! God desires to give an ABUNDANCE to all so that we have the opportunities and means for good works. But one of the most serious warnings is to those who refuse or fail to DO good works when they are given the means and opportunity by God:

MATTHEW 25:31-46 “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 “All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. 33 “And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 ‘for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger *[lit. a foreigner, alien, or guest]* and you took Me in; 36 ‘I

³ 2 Cor. 9:12.

was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited [lit. to inspect or relieve] Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ [these are good works] 37 “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 ‘When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 ‘Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40 “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’ 41 “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 ‘for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43 ‘I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ [these did NOT do good works] 44 “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ 45 “Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.’ 46 “**And these [those who did NOT do good works] will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.**”

Simply sending a check to a faraway organization does not absolve us of good works because this whole passage is to the SHEEP, not exclusively elders or ministers. Everyone in the Body of Christ is His sheep! None of the works that Jesus described are outdated or only works to be done before this modern age. They are simple, but things that make a huge difference in someone’s life—providing food, drink, or clothing to those who lack, providing shelter for those in need, relieving the sick (the meaning of “visiting the sick”), or visiting prisoners.

While money can help with many of these problems, how much more personal is it if you are directly involved? I want to offer a challenge to everyone. Ask God to give you the means and opportunity to serve. And before you send your next offering, instead of sending it to an organization, find someone you can help directly. If you do not know someone, ask others for suggestions. Get to truly know your brothers and sisters. I guarantee that everyone benefits from having a relationship with brethren and you will eventually find something you can do for someone. It does not always require money—just some prayer and time and effort.

One of the other benefits of having relationships with brethren is they go a long way to preventing AND reconciling offenses. It also helps to avoid judging others. Offending and judging others is MUCH harder if we KNOW the person. And doing good works unifies us all. How many will die because they refuse to reconcile, quit judging others, or reject doing good works? These can be personally rewarding. In fact, Jesus says the reward is eternal life! But everyone has the choice. So, brethren, be about doing these things so all may “**eat from the tree of life**, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” (Rev. 2: 7).

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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