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Warned and Rewarded



Part 25 (970223AM)

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We all are surrounded each day by warnings of every kind; that bothersome seat belt alarm in our cars, the smoke detectors when the toast gets stuck in the toaster, labels on food warning that it has too much fat or sugar and so on!

Radiation, sun, and air are all dangerous, we are warned. But life goes on. Some warnings are true and some we aren't sure about. This morning we can all put our natural suspicions and aversions to warnings down, and let the Lord through His Word teach us about God's Warning System!

So many times people have been misinformed and actually steered the opposite direction they needed to go for safety. The Lord never does that. He is TRUTH and LOVE. His warnings are right every time.

BLACK DEATH

The Great Plague ⁽⁴⁾ that infected London in the seventeenth century began innocuously enough with a few isolated cases in May 1664. One year later in that same month, 590 cases were reported, but ignored. By June the number swelled to 6,137. Panic ensued as the figure rose to 17,000 in July. Like stampeding cattle, two-thirds of London's population fled their homes as the deaths totaled 31,000 in August, 1665. But that was only the beginning. By the time the Plague was brought under control, more than 70,000 Londoners had been buried or burned.

What caused this catastrophe? The infinitesimal bites of fleas carried by diseased rats. Back then, however, people thought badsmelling air was the problem, so they carried sweet-scented posy petals in their pockets to ward off the disease. Hospitals even walked patients around rose gardens hoping to cleanse their lungs with the flowers' fragrance. This cured no one, of course, and it's said that one man sang these words as he piled the victims onto his pushcart: Ring around the roses, A pocket full of posies; Ashes, ashes, we all fall down. ⁽⁵⁾

Ironically, this parody of calamity is now sung all over the world as an innocent nursery rhyme. Yet for those who know the horror of its history, the last line is a sobering reminder of the greatest plague of all-death.

Even those fortunate enough to escape the Plague in that day still eventually died. "Death is a debt we all must pay," wrote the Greek poet Euripides. ⁽⁶⁾ "Ashes, ashes, we all fall down" is also a constant refrain throughout the Scriptures.

Our Lord warns us how to escape death and find life. Where? In His Word! Remember Psalm 19?

The Word of God Tells Us How to Find Life

HIS PERFECT LAW RESTORES (v. 7a *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul*) = The Word of God is THE DIVINE TEACHER: God's truth that totally transforms, touching all of life, turning the whole person to God.

HIS SURE TESTIMONY MAKES WISE (v. 7b *the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple*) = The Word of God is THE DIVINE WITNESS: 9. God's testimony is absolutely trustworthy making us skilled in the art of holy living. So the word teaches the truth of God and testifies the way of God.

HIS RIGHT STATUTES REJOICE (v. 8a *The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart*) = The Word of God is THE DIVINE DIRECTIONS. God's statutes give directions to only secure place in the universe, causing great joy because we know what is absolutely right. so the Word teaches the truth of God and testifies the way of God and turns the walk to God.

HIS PURE COMMANDMENTS ENLIGHTEN (v. 8b *the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes*) = The Word of God is THE DIVINE DECREES: God's commands give a clear portrait of God's non-optional absolutes, flawlessly bringing light on every area. So the Word teaches the truth of God and testifies the way of God and turns the walk to God and ties us to the will of God.

HIS CLEAN FEAR ENDURES (v. 9a *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever*) = The Word of God is (eternal life) THE DIVINE CONDITION. This is fearing God, lovingly acknowledging by my actions God sees me.

HIS TRUE JUDGMENTS LIBERATE (v. 9b *the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether*) = The Word of God is (REV.19). THE DIVINE DECISIONS. God's judgments, His final word on everything! Non-negotiable living.

- In six masterful strokes the eternal author etches his character and sufficiency toward us.
 - The divine teacher: God's care that totally transforms.
 - The divine witness: God's testimony absolutely trustworthy.
 - The divine directions: God's statutes giving directions to only secure place in the universe.
 - The divine decrees: God's commands giving a clear portrait of God's non-optional absolutes.
 - The divine condition: fearing God, lovingly acknowledging by my actions God sees me.
 - The divine decisions. God's judgments, His final word on everything! Non-negotiable living.
 - God's final word "the judgments of the Lord".
 - God's faithful word "are true" (*absolutely true, never false*).
 - God's firm word "and righteous altogether" (*mutual parts explain and defend one another*).

Warnings:

In the garden God warned Adam and Eve [Genesis 2:16-17](#) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: 17 "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (NKJV). There was God's warning. Did they heed and obey? Of course we are painfully aware of the deadly results of their disobedience.

Before the Flood God warned the people through a mighty prophet who preached unflinchingly against the whole world! Jude 14-15 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 "to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (NKJV) There was God's warning. Did they heed and obey? Of course we are painfully aware of the deadly results of their disobedience.

At the Flood God warned [Genesis 6:3, 5](#) And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he [is] indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years 5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every intent of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually. (NKJV). There was God's warning. Did they heed and obey? Of course we are painfully aware of the deadly results of their disobedience.

Two thousand years later the Lord Himself came down and warned a family to get away from a city named Sodom, whose name now stands for wretchedness. [Genesis 19:14-26](#) So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking. 15 When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city." 16 And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. 17 So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed." 24 Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. 25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. 26 But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. (NKJV) There was God's warning. Did they heed and obey? Of course we are painfully aware of the deadly results of their disobedience.

Should we listen to the Word of the Lord this morning? Yes. [Psalm 19:10-11](#) More to be desired [are they] than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, [And] in keeping them [there is] great reward. (NKJV)

As the writer of Hebrews said: [Hebrews 2:1-3](#) Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard [Him,] (NKJV)

Let's learn about God's warnings from His Word the Holy Scriptures.

In the Old Testament the word for warn is #2094 *zabar* 'teach, warn, shine, lighten' in 5 places:

- God's warnings are based upon His Word [Exodus 18:20](#) And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. (KJV)
- God's warnings have to do with how we live our daily life. Second [Chronicles 19:10](#) "Whatever case comes to you from your brethren who dwell in their cities, whether of

bloodshed or offenses against law or commandment, against statutes or ordinances, you shall warn them, lest they trespass against the LORD and wrath come upon you and your brethren. Do this, and you will not be guilty. (NKJV)

- God's warnings flow from the Divine Word which teaches, witnesses and directs our lives [Psalm 19:11](#) Moreover by them is thy servant warned: [and] in keeping of them [there is] great reward. (KJV)
- God's warnings ignored are the path to destruction [Ecclesiastes 4:13](#) Better [is] a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. (KJV)
- God's warnings are simple to follow [Ecclesiastes 12:12](#) And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books [there is] no end; and much study [is] a weariness of the flesh. (KJV)

In the NT the key words are #5537 *chrematizo* 'warned of God by consultation' 4 times:

- God's warnings kept Baby Jesus safe [Matthew 2:12](#) Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. (NKJV)
- God's warnings led Joseph to take his family the right direction for the Lord [Matthew 2:22](#) But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. (NKJV)
- God's warnings led Cornelius to seek the way of salvation [Acts 10:22](#) And they said, "Cornelius [the] centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." (NKJV)
- God's warnings led Noah to serve the Lord in a most wicked time on earth [Hebrews 11:7](#) By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)

And '*hupodeknumi* 'show by placing before the eyes of, teach' 2 times:

- God's warnings have to do with future wrath to come! [Matthew 3:7](#) But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (NKJV)
- God's warnings have to do with future wrath to come! [Luke 3:7](#) Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (NKJV)

And finally '*noutheteo* 'warn, exhort and admonish'. This is a vital part of those who serve the Lord. It is:

- God's warnings are a regular part of daily life in the body of Christ [Acts 20:31](#) "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. (NKJV)
- God's warnings are the product of spiritual maturity [Romans 15:14](#) Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. (NKJV)
- God's warnings were directed to even carnal, babyish and fleshly servants of the Lord [1 Corinthians 4:14](#) I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn [you.] (NKJV)
- God's warnings lead toward maturing us in Christ [Colossians 1:28](#) Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (NKJV)
- God's warnings flow from the Spirit-filled walk [Colossians 3:16](#) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (NKJV)
- God's warnings are part of a godly spiritual leader's ministry to saints [1 Thessalonians 5:12](#) And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you. (NKJV)
- God's warnings are to rescue those headed toward disaster in the Christian life [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#) Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. (NKJV)
- God's warnings are to restore fallen brothers and sisters in Christ [Second Thessalonians 3:15](#) Yet do not count [him] as an enemy, but admonish [him] as a brother. (NKJV)

FLEE YOUTHFUL LUSTS: Don't...

1. HABITUATE your lusts
2. CRIPPLE your conscience
3. SOIL your mind
4. DESENSITIZE your warning system
5. MISUSE your body, mind and eyes
6. SPOIL your ability to give
7. LESSEN your desires for a godly wife

1. O.1 Swindoll,
2. Swindoll,
3. Donald McCullough, *Waking from the American Dream* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1975), 15.
4. Adapted from Swindoll, *Shedding Light*, p. 61.
5. As told by Charles R. Swindoll in *Come Before Winter . . . and Share My Hope* (Portland, Oreg.: Multnomah Press, 1985), p. 34.

6. Euripides, as quoted in *The Home Book of Quotations*, 10th ed., comp. Burton Stevenson (New York, N.Y.: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1967), p. 377.
7. From *Heaven*, by J. Oswald Sanders, p. 148-49.
8. *Maier, The Book of Nahum*, p. 127. Diodorus's work is called the *Chronicles*. The material on the fall n in turn from *Persica*, a chronicle of Assyria and Persia in twenty-three books by a Greek physician named Cresias, of which only fragments survive.

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