

Teaching for 10-8-08

Consequences

If you ever forget the Lord your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. Like the nations the Lord destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the Lord your God. Deuteronomy 8:19

The hard truth of Scripture is that there are consequences. Never mind what our society has been teaching us for the past forty years. Never mind that it seems we have gotten away with things for a long time. God has built into our world the unchangeable truth that every one of our actions has consequences. Perhaps the reason that we find our society falling down around us is the fact that we have forgotten this truth. We have forgotten it in the Church. We have forgotten it in our society. We have forgotten it (using a now worn out phrase) from Wall Street to Main street. It makes no difference how much we may not like it, or even disagree with it, the fact is, the Word of God, which does not change, states, *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap* (Galatians 6:7).

Clear warnings

Deuteronomy 9 contains some very clear warnings from Moses to the children of Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land. Moses makes it clear that they needed to be very careful (vs. 1) because they would face the very real temptation that, *Otherwise when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God... You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."* (vs. 12-14, 17). The warnings of Paul to the Galatians state that we are to not be deceived. God gives very clear warnings that turning from him, forgetting his blessings, and bowing to sin will have definite consequences. In fact the Scriptures are overloaded with the reality that God loves us so much, he gives us more than ample warning, as well as opportunity to repent.

We are reaping

Look around. We are reaping what we have been sowing. Because we have allowed unrestrained greed and have worshipped at the altar of Mammon, we are reaping the consequences of that with economic collapse. Because we have allowed debt to be multiplied, we are reaping the consequences of that debt that is coming due. And it's not only those issues grabbing current headlines. We are reaping the consequences of unrestrained immorality, of the murder of unborn children, of lack of stewardship of the land, of imperialistic attitudes in our world, of turning our backs on Israel, the apple of God's eye. Now the harvest is coming, and it seems that we are reaping in all of these areas at once. Perhaps the greatest sin of all is that we may still think that somehow we are exempt because we are "special" to God. Israel was special to God, but she was not exempt from the law of sowing and reaping. We will reap the consequences of our actions.

How many times?

We might tend to be weary of the many calls to repentance, and say, how often must I hear this same message over and over? The answer, of course, is that we need to hear this message until we truly take it to heart. Which we have not really done yet. How can we tell? We are not broken over our sin. We are not truly contrite before God and one another over how we have turned our backs on God and followed our own ways. We prefer our comfort and ease over being on our faces before God in prayer. We prefer business as usual to protracted seasons of agonizing, desperate, persistent prayer for the mercy of God to fall upon us. No, we are not there yet. Is it too late? Only God knows. As long as it is today, there is hope. But God will not wink away our sin. He requires us to return to him in genuine, heart-felt brokenness and repentance, and turn away from our sin. Turn away from greed, turn away from self-satisfaction, turn away from complacency, turn away from the worship of Mammon and lust. Turn away from self-righteousness that says, it's their fault, and realize that the seeds of these things reside our all our hearts. So how many times must we speak this, and hear it? The answer is found in Hebrews chapter 3, verses 13-15, *You must warn each other every day, while it is still "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ. Remember what it says: "Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts as Israel did when they rebelled."*

Our Holy Lord, we come to you while it is called today, and we ask that you would grant to us, as your people, a genuine spirit of brokenness and humility. Give us the ability to see and acknowledge our sin. We confess to you that we have not understood or lived in the light of the fact that you say there are real consequences for our sin. We ask that you would have mercy upon us, Lord, and help us to turn back to you. Help us, Lord, to take your Word seriously where you have warned us, and empower us by your Holy Spirit to turn away from our sin, and turn toward you, that you will forgive our sin, and heal our land. We pray in Jesus redeeming Name. Amen.