

WATCH OUT ! THAT SNAKE WILL BITE YOU !

A Biblical Admonition to Walk in Truth and Righteousness

by Elder Bob Allgood

He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him. --- Surely a serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babler is no better". Eccles.10:8, 11

I learned as a boy growing up near the palmetto infested woods and swamps of south central Florida that certain kinds of SNAKES WILL BITE YOU. When I went fishing or hunting with my father he always warned me to WATCH OUT FOR SNAKES. My Daddy and Mr. Baker, our neighbor, often caught snakes and other reptiles to sell to the Ross Allen Reptile Farm in Silver Springs. Mr. Baker had SNAKE PENS close by our house and my Daddy had hog pens out back. My Daddy was not a Primitive Baptist but he had enough sense to know that YOU DON'T LET SNAKES AND HOGS LIVE IN THE HOUSE WITH YOU. Daddy knew that the hogs like to wallow in the mire (II Peter 2:22), and that A SNAKE WILL BITE YOU. Since HOGS are not my subject I will stick with SNAKES. In the Bible A SNAKE is called a Serpent, a Viper, and a Cockatrice. They may be called by other names, but these three will do for now.

Solomon, in his God given wisdom and under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, wrote these Proverbial words. Proverbs are acceptable and upright words; words of truth spoken in wisdom; words of admonishment, worthy of study (Eccles 12:9-12). Proverbs often teach a general truth that becomes an absolute truth when properly applied to the right principal in God's Word (i.e. as we rightly divide the word of truth). Everyone who digs a pit does not fall into it. So what kind of A PIT is Solomon speaking of ? Everyone who breaks a hedge does not have a serpent bite them. So what is the HEDGE that Solomon is referring to ? Solomon says that A SERPENT WILL BITE. But all serpents do not bite. So what kind of a serpent or snake is he talking about ? Solomon says "a babler is no better" than a serpent ! With the

Lord's help let us examine THE PIT, THE HEDGE, THE SERPENT and THE BABBLER in our proverbial text.

First let me make it clear, the admonishment in this text has nothing to do with the eternal destiny of a soul to eternal heaven or eternal hell. It deals with THE FOLLY OF MEN WHO KNOW NOT TO COMMIT THE FOLLIES (sins), BUT COMMIT THEM ANYWAY. As "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly {send forth from -ba} him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour" (Eccs.10:1). Man is the cause of all sin (Romans 5:12). Christ was made to be sin for God's elect, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him (II Cor. 5:17-21). No one can lay any charge against God's elect and nothing can separate God's elect from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (see Romans 8:28-39). God's elect shall never eternally perish, but shall be glorified and conformed to the image of His dear Son.

Believing this eternal truth, we rightly divide the word and see there is A TIMELY consequence for the sins the elect of God commit in THIS TIME WORLD. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal 6:7-8). Contrary to what some teach, this passage has nothing to do with man's eternal destiny, but it has everything to do with the quality of life in this time world. While there is a real Eternal Salvation (Heaven) and a real Eternal Judgment (Hell), there is a timely or Gospel SALVATION and there is a timely JUDGMENT for sin.

Sin is sin, but some sins are committed in ignorance and unbelief, while other sins are committed willfully. Paul said concerning his sins (not his mistakes) before his conversion; "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief" (read I Tim 2:8-16). This same Paul wrote Romans 8:28-31 and 9:18-24 and Ephesians 1:3-6, in which he teaches about God's Eternal Covenant of Grace and Election. So Paul is not saying that he became one of God's elect and was eternally saved because he committed sin in ignorance and unbelief. He is saying he obtained timely mercy because of his ignorance and unbelief. Sin is still sin regardless of one's ignorance or unbelief ! Paul was not excusing his sins because of ignorance ! But it is one thing to sin in ignorance and quite another to sin willfully.

Some of God's people can and do SIN WILLFULLY ! Paul wrote, "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (see Hebrews 10:26-31). This is speaking of A TIMELY JUDGMENT for those who deliberately depart from the old paths of TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. There are those "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom 1:32). "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that commit such things" (Rom 2:2).

The term PIT is symbolic of several things, most of which have to do with the SINS of man and/or THE PLACE of God's judgment. "THE PIT" speaks of the grave in many places, for example Ezekiel 32:24-30. THE PIT speaks of God's judgment. When Korah and Company rebelled against Moses, God opened the earth and they "went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation" (Numbers 16). THE BOTTOMLESS PIT is the place of "that old SERPENT, which is the Devil, and Satan -" (Rev 20:1-2). The term SNAKE PIT may have come from this passage. In the judgment of Lucifer, King of Babylon, (who was a figure of Satan), God said, "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming -- For thou hast said -- I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit" (Isa 14:4-16).

A PIT speaks of the DELIBERATE ungodly activities of men. The Bible says "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate [or head]" (Ps.7:15-16). Solomon wrote "Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit -" (Prov 28:10). Jesus spoke of plants "which my heavenly Father hath not planted" as being "blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch [or pit] (Matt 15:13- 15). The first time the word PIT is mentioned in Scripture it speaks of a well without water where Joseph was thrown by his own brothers because of their hatred toward him (Gen. 27:3-4, 18-28).

A PIT as used in our text refers to A PIT OF SIN. Everyone who digs a hole in the ground is not doomed to fall into it. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all digged wells or pits and did not fall into them. But everyone who digs for themselves A PIT OF SIN shall fall into it. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption". The words DIGGETH and SOWETH imply a deliberate or determined act by the DIGGER and SOWER. "He that diggeth a pit -" tells me that the DIGGER is deliberately DIGGING. Most sins are "deliberately committed" either in "ignorance and unbelief" OR "knowingly and willfully". Either way, sin is sin !

It is only after one has been enlightened with the knowledge of the truth that he can knowingly or willfully commit sin against the truth. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness" (Rom 6:16). YIELDING is a deliberate and determined act on the part of the YIELDER. When a person deliberately departs from Truth and refuses to turn back to the Truth, the Bible calls him a HERETIC. A study of the word teaches us that A HERETIC is one who MAKES A CHOICE and DELIBERATELY and KNOWINGLY DEPARTS FROM THE TRUTH (the Faith or Doctrine of God, i.e. The Old Paths of Righteousness), and thereby causes divisions (Titus 3:10-11). A Heretic deliberately and knowingly diggeth a pit and then tries to lead others to fall into it with him.

The HEDGE speaks of a circular enclosure, a fence or wall that SEPARATES and serves as a PROTECTION. God's people are to be A

SEPARATE PEOPLE in this time world walking in truth and righteousness. When doing so, they enjoy **GOD'S PROTECTION** and **DEFENSE**, being "**HEDGED IN**". Eternally, God's people are **SEALED** by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13) and **SECURE** in the **HAND** of God the Father and our Saviour Jesus Christ (John 10:27-31). Eternally, none can lay charge to one of God's elect and nothing can separate them from the love of God in Jesus Christ. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his" - but in this time world - "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Tim. 2:19).

Job, the servant of God, was "hedged in". God recommended Job to Satan as a prime test case for **INTEGRITY**, saying, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth [puts away] evil" (Job 1:8-10). Regardless of whatever faults some psychological liberal minded preachers find with Job, I will go with what God said about him. Job was hedged in because he feared God, eschewed evil and was upright. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Ps.1:1). "The steps of a good man are ordered (established) by the Lord: and he delighteth in His way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for The Lord upholdeth him with his hand" (Ps 37:23-24).

GOD "HEDGES HIS PEOPLE IN" while they are walking according to His Word, in **TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS**. The Scripture is abundantly clear that God's people are to walk in truth and righteousness. The very grace of God that brings salvation, "teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world -". All of God's people everywhere would agree with this statement. However after they agree, they would then disagree on what constitutes Truth and Righteousness. So agreement in part does not produce grounds for ecumenical unity. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed" (Amos 3:3). The Scripture teaches to rightly divide the word of truth, to walk in truth and to follow The Spirit of Truth. Most who profess to being God's people, claim to be doing this, but their many different man-made denominational doctrines and practices causes **SEPARATION** one from another. This has been the case for almost two thousand years. The True Church "ought to obey God rather than man". "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice". Christ "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself A **PECULIAR PEOPLE**, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-15). Obedience to God's word is the basis our **FELLOWSHIP** with God, not our **RELATIONSHIP** with God. This principal has always applied to God's people in all ages, and it holds true for us **TODAY IN THE CHURCH**.

God's Vineyard in the Old Testament, which speaks of his people, and His Church in the New Testament, was "hedged in" (Isa 5:1-2). But God removed the hedge from his vineyard because it brought forth "wild grapes" (i.e. strange fruit, strange doctrine and strange worship - Isa 5:3-7). Timely judgment came upon God's people because of those "wild grapes". We will see in little while that God sent fiery serpents to bite them ! It seems to me

the only hope that God's people have in this time world, that the Lord will not remove his PROTECTIVE HEDGE is their obedience to His word.

Moses said to Israel "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known" (Deut. 11:26- 28). Moses was talking to God's children by promise, NOT to unregenerate sinners. Obedience or Disobedience does not change one's relationship but it has everything to do with one's fellowship. This principal is taught in the New Testament in II Cor. 5:14-7:1, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light (truth) with darkness (untruth)? Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord".

Jesus said "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". I believe there has always been THE TRUE CHURCH of the Lord Jesus Christ here on this earth, from the banks of the river Jordan to present time. I believe there will be THE TRUE CHURCH of the Lord Jesus Christ here on this earth when he comes back to call these vile bodies from the grave (I Cor. 15:50-58). I think THE TRUE CHURCH OF GOD THAT WALKS IN TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IS HEDGED IN. But Jesus Christ can remove the Candlestick of the church that breaks the hedge and brings forth "wild grapes or strange fruit". Corrupt trees bring forth corrupt fruit and good trees bring forth good fruit (Matt 7:15-20). But sometimes good trees get diseased and bring forth STRANGE FRUIT or NO FRUIT at all. Trees in the vineyard that produce STRANGE FRUIT or NO FRUIT, if they can not be saved, are to be cut down and cast out before they INFECT the other good trees. Read Luke 13:6-9, II Tim 2:16-17, Matt 5:29-30.

The BREAKING of an hedge speaks of one BREAKING OUT or BREACHING THE WALL of God's protection. "Whoso breaketh an hedge -" speaks of the deliberate violation of the principals of Truth and Righteousness (i.e the deliberate departure from THE DOCTRINE OF GOD). The act of BREAKING OUT or BREACHING THE WALLS is just as deliberate as is the act of DIGGING A PIT. Paul said, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the later times Some shall depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits". This is a deliberate departure, not "an accident or a mistake". "He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin". Some men deliberately rise up and speak perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves (Acts 20:30).

When Nehemiah heard that "the wall of Jerusalem is broken down" he wept, mourned, fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. The BROKEN DOWN WALL depicted the broken down spiritual condition of God's people Israel. The wall was not broken down accidently; it was broken down deliberately by evil men. The broken wall had to be rebuilt by "returning to truth and righteousness". God had placed WATCHMEN on the wall to warn

God's people against departing from the principals of truth and righteousness, BUT THE PEOPLE WOULD NOT HEAR THEIR WARNINGS (Jer. 6:17, Eze 3:16-21).

The SERPENT refers to God's means of bringing judgment or chastisement on his people. I realize that our sins were judged in Christ on Calvary, but there is a judgment or chastisement in this time world for disobedience. Peter said, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God" (I Pet 4:17). Paul wrote "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and sourgeth every son whom he receiveth --- But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons" (Heb 12:5-8). Hymenaeus and Alexander taught A LIE, saying that the resurrection had already passed, and Paul turned them over to Satan, the Old Serpent, "that they may learn not to blaspheme" (I Tim 1:20). We are to "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine (the Faith) - and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

The BABBLER in our text, which is no better than A SERPENT, is in plain Southern language, A COTTON PICKING LIAR, and I didn't make that up. The word Babblor means a "seed picker", like a crow, but figuratively speaks of "a base fellow" who has nothing better to do than gossip and tell lies. Some philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoicks accused Paul the Apostle of being a "Babblor", a setter forth of strange gods "because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection (Acts 17:18). Many of the Ministers in the religious world today would rather be PHILOSOPHERS or COUNSELORS than PREACHERS of Jesus Christ and the Resurrection.

Written in love for God's people and the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.