

The Worth of Warnings (Part 2)

By Daryl Wingerd

In Part 1 of this article we discussed the value and purpose of biblical warnings to believers—warnings about making salvation certain. Now I want to challenge you to consider four of these warnings and examine your own response to them.



The Warning Not To Love the World

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (1 John 2:15)

You are a professing Christian, but what are the objects of your truest affection? What goals do you pursue with the greatest effort and diligence? What tends to make you feel happiest? Are you most attracted to the pleasures, possessions, and priorities of this life, or do you find your greatest joy in Christ and his dramatically different priorities, while anticipating the pleasures and joys of your eternal inheritance? If you fail to heed this warning—if your greatest affections are for the world and the things in it—you could end up like a professing Christian named Demas, who, “in love with this present world,” deserted Paul to pursue worldly satisfaction (2 Tim. 4:10).

The Warning to Fear God Rather than Men

I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! (Luke 12:4-5)

It is frighteningly common these days to hear accounts of Christians being killed for their faith around the world. God has not decreed that every believer will die as a martyr, but in this text Jesus clearly calls all believers to be *willing* to die for the faith, if so called, rather than cave in to the demands of evil men. Those who fear men more than God—those who would deny the faith rather than suffer for it—do not truly understand or fear the God they say they love and serve. Are you prone to being a man-pleaser when it comes to living out your faith in Christ? Take warning! If you deny Christ in subtle ways now, when the stakes are not very high, how will you respond when your life is on the line?

The Warning Not To Be Deceived by Sin

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as

it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb. 3:12-13)

The warning in this passage is to avoid being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Sin beckons, lures, entices, and promises rich reward for the professing Christian who has renounced it through repentance. In competition with the gospel’s promise of everlasting satisfaction *later*, sin deceitfully peddles satisfaction *now*, comfort *now*, pleasure *now*, and happiness *now*. The lie is that these supposed benefits do not bring true happiness or satisfaction, but only bring pain and sorrow, not only now, but for all eternity, for those who fail to heed the warning.

Along with this warning we are given the means to heed it: encouragement from other believers. Christians are to be in regular contact with each other—regular fellowship—through which we warn, encourage, teach, exhort, and strengthen each other to resist the temptation to be deceived by sin. Later in this same letter, the author directly refers to the necessity of regular, consistent fellowship with a local church, commanding believers not to neglect it. Professing Christians who think they can heed the warning to avoid the deceitfulness of sin without being committed to Christian fellowship are showing themselves to be misinformed—already deceived, and thus doubly vulnerable to the ravages of sin.

The Warning Not To Drift Away

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard [i.e., the gospel of Christ], lest we drift away from it. (Heb. 2:1)

Professing Christians who end up falling away from the faith don’t often do so suddenly or dramatically. They tend to drift away gradually. Their hot affection for Christ slowly begins to cool, their zeal for biblical doctrine begins to wane over time, and their commitment to the fellowship of the church is gradually replaced by worldly priorities. Meanwhile they continue to consider themselves believers, and other Christians tend to be reluctant to assess them differently, even though the drifting is becoming increasingly evident. This is the very danger of drifting: it tends to deceive by being subtle rather than dramatic. And this explains the remedy listed in Hebrews 2:1—“pay much closer attention to what we have learned.” Drifting away can only be prevented by pressing toward. Loss can only be prevented by gain.

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Pet. 3:17-18)

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