

The Vincennes Voice

“...The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight...” (Matt. 3:3)

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HOW ARE YOU FOLLOWING JESUS?

Larry R. Ping II

Spiritually speaking, there are many dangerous positions to take. Situations which lend themselves to our being tempted and to our giving into temptation. We must avoid these positions at all costs, and surely do all we can to not place ourselves into them. Unfortunately, we do from time to time, just as did Peter (Matt. 26:69-75).

Jesus had finished praying for the “cup” to “pass” from Him and subsequently was betrayed by Judas (Matt. 26:37-56). This act prompted the disciples to “forsake” Him and flee (Matt. 26:56). But notice the poor position into which Peter placed himself, opening himself up to stern temptation.

“But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest’s palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end” (Matt. 26:58).

Though his intentions may have been of the best, Peter located himself in two unbelievably bad places, and

sometimes we do the same, though we should strive diligently not to.

First, Peter attempted to follow Jesus “afar off.” The only way to follow Jesus is closely (I Pet. 2:21). Too many, like Peter, want to keep Jesus within “eyesight” so to speak, but at the same time be “far enough” away to test and try-out a sinful lifestyle. Paul warned, “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (I Thess. 5:22). It should be no surprise the result of not being close enough to Jesus is the loss of a relationship with Him. James said it best, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (Jam. 4:8). Do not follow “afar off,” follow closely and intimately.

Also, Peter attempted to follow Jesus “by himself” in the middle of a very hostile and anti-Jesus crowd. And as we know, it ended in a very unfortunate way for Peter, denying Christ three times (Matt. 26:69-75). Friends, it does not matter how strong of a child of God we feel we may

be, getting off by ourselves in the wrong crowd will ultimately be our downfall (I Cor. 15:33). Solomon concisely said, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Prov. 13:20).

On this day, be determined to stay close to the Christ. He said, “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour” (Jn. 12:26). Be determined to spend your time with those of like faith, especially when entering “unfavorable” territory. The preacher said, “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up” (Eccl. 4:9-10). Today, put yourself in a position to win. “Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (I Cor. 15:58).

THE ART OF PERSUASION

Larry R. Ping II

Often, we use the word “persuaded.” Many of us sing a song entitled “Almost Persuaded.” To be persuaded is to “be moved by argument, entreaty...to a belief, position or course of action.” Even those in the Bible were persuaded to do and believe certain things.

The chief priests and elders “persuaded” the multitude, “But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus” (Matt. 27:20). Clearly, persuasion can be used for the bad just as it can be for the good.

Paul and Barnabas “persuaded” the new converts, “Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God” (Acts 13:43). There is an important lesson here. That is, those who are new Christians need to be heavily encouraged, edified, and educated so as to provide a

solid foundation upon which to stand (Matt. 28:18-20; I Cor. 3:11; Acts 4:12).

Out-of-town Jews “persuaded” Lystra-Jews, “And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead” (Acts 14:19). This simply displays how far some folks will go to persuade others to do evil things. Some will stop at nothing! The wise man warned, “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence” (Prov. 4:14-17).

Paul almost “persuaded” Agrippa, “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). This incredibly sad occurrence in the

Bible clearly exhibits that “almost persuaded” is to be “altogether lost.” On the final Day of Judgment, I will not be able to say, “I almost was baptized” or “I almost did the right thing” or “I almost confessed my sin” and be accepted. Paul noted, “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2). Conversely, we must be willing to persuade others to come to God. Paul admonished, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (II Cor. 5:11).

On this day, be resolute in being “persuaded” to do things which are good and right and profitable, but be firm in not being “persuaded” to do things which are bad and evil which bring damnation. Easier said than done? Yes, absolutely! But done it must be. And let us help each other to ensure we are consistent in our good and Godly behavior.

FIRST CITY CHURCH OF CHRIST

MEETING AT HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS

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MEETING TIMES (EST)

SUNDAY

Bible Study – 10:00 am
Worship – 11:00 am & 3:00 pm

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study – 7:00 pm